

Give Your Back a Break

AGC OF INDIANA

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The nation's number one workplace safety problem is back injuries. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, every year, more than one million workers suffer back injuries. Nearly every activity we do involves some degree of lifting. Improper lifting can cause serious and permanent injuries. Although there is no method for totally eliminating back injuries in the workplace, you can prevent most of them by performing your daily lifting tasks safely and remembering a few simple and basic rules for lifting.

Before you lift, examine the load. Push the object lightly with your hands or feet to estimate its weight. Know your limits and ask a coworker for help if you feel the object is too heavy for you to lift alone. You should also make sure the weight is balanced. Loose items inside a box can cause injuries if the box becomes unbalanced. Examine the object for sharp edges, grease, oil and other hazards. Wear gloves to protect your hands and to help you grasp the load firmly.

Next, survey your route and make sure it's free of obstructions and tripping hazards. Avoid walking on uneven and slippery surfaces. Plan ahead and know where and how you are going to put down the load. When you are ready to lift, stand close to the object with your feet spread about shoulder-width apart. With your back as straight as possible, bend your knees, squat down, and get a tight grip on the object before you begin to lift. Hold the load close to your body while you straighten your knees, using your leg muscles to push yourself up. Make sure you can see where you are going. Walk forward, turn slowly and never twist your torso. Unload the item by squatting down once again, keeping your back straight.

Lifts done above shoulder height and below your knees are some of the most hazardous to your back. Don't over-reach. Use a ladder when you are lifting something over your head. When possible, try to avoid lifting by using a mechanical lifting aid such as a dolly or a forklift.

Back injuries heal slowly, if at all. A back injury may prevent you from working and enjoying life for a long time. It might seem natural to simply bend your back to lift a heavy object, but it is far better to make the effort to use proper lifting techniques than to risk injuring your back.

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Company Name: _____

Superintendent: _____

Foreman: _____

Project: _____

Work Area: _____

Date: _____

Instructor Signature: _____

Title: _____

ATTENDEE SIGNATURES:

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JOB HAZARD ANALYSIS (JHA)

Major Tasks to Complete

Hazards Involved

Control Measures

Additional Topics of Discussion: _____