

Safer Lifting



Improper lifting techniques can injure your workers & result in costly, lengthy recuperation & rehabilitation.

Back injuries account for 20% of yearly workplace injuries nationwide & 25% of Workers' Compensation indemnity claims. Bureau of Labor Statistics data show 80% of back injuries involved the lower back; 75% occurred during lifting. Teaching your workers proper lifting techniques & enforcing their use can help you prevent costly injuries.

Safe Lifting

- **Examine the object to be lifted.**

- Note any sharp edges or slick spots
 - Look for markings showing its weight
 - Look to see if it would be an awkward load (e.g. contents unbalanced or able to shift, too big for you to have a good grip, so big that you cannot see where you are going)

- **If object appears too heavy or too big:**

- Seek assistance in lifting object
 - Partially unpack container & move contents in more than 1 trip
 - Use a lifting aid (e.g. hand truck, pallet jack)

- **Look over the path you will travel while carrying the object**

- Look for slip/fall hazards
 - Make sure you can reach the table, rack, etc., upon which you plan to put your load

- **Lift the object:**

- Stand near the object with feet spread about shoulder width, one foot slightly in front of the other to help you maintain balance
 - Squat, bending at your knees, not your waist; tuck chin in; keep back as vertical as possible
 - Grasp object firmly before starting to lift. Slowly lift using your legs by straightening them; do not twist your body
 - After lift is completed, keep object as close to body as possible
 - Use your feet, not torso, if you must turn when carrying the object; do not twist
 - Reverse steps if you are going to place the object below your waist; remember to bend at the knees & keep back as vertical as possible

You should provide refresher training in safe lifting often to remind your workers. Your local chapter of the National Safety Council or local health care providers can assist you. You should also train them in the safe use of lifting aids such as hand trucks & pallet jacks. You should enforce the use of these techniques & retrain workers as needed. If workers wear backbelts, remind them frequently that backbelts do not increase one's strength; they cannot lift bigger heavier loads just because they wear backbelts.