

Backs and Lifting

This safety talk is designed for discussion leaders to use in preparing safety meetings. Set a specific time and date for your safety meeting. Publicize your meeting so everyone involved will be sure to attend.

Review this safety talk before the meeting and become familiar with its content. Make notes about the points made in this talk that pertain to your workplace. You should be able to present the material in your own words and lead the discussion without reading it. Collect whatever materials and props you will need ahead of time. Try to use equipment in your workplace to demonstrate your points.

BEGINNING THE MEETING

Give the safety talk in your own words. Use the printed talk merely as a guide. The purpose of a safety meeting is to initiate discussion of safety problems and provide solutions to those problems. Encourage employees to discuss hazards or potential hazards they encounter on the job. Ask them to suggest ways to improve safety in their area.

Don't let the meeting turn into a gripe session about unrelated topics. As discussion leader, it's your job to make sure the topic is safety. Discussing other topics wastes time and can ruin the effectiveness of your safety meeting.

At the end of the meeting, ask employees to sign a sheet on the back of this talk as a record that they attended the safety meeting. Keep this talk on file for your records.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

Do you realize you may be risking serious injury many times a day and not even know it? Well, it's true if you don't lift correctly. Improper lifting may cause back injuries that can take months and even years to heal. Sometimes they are permanent and disabling. A little know how, however, can enable you to lift correctly.

Preparing to Lift:

Give the load the once-over. If it looks too heavy, don't be afraid to ask for help. Be sure you're wearing safety shoes. There is always the chance of dropping something on your toes. If the object has rough or sharp edges, wear a good, tough pair of work gloves. They'll give you a good grip and protect your hands.

Making the Lift:

Crouch down with the load between your legs and get a good grip on the object. As you rise, lift with your legs, keeping your back vertical and the load as close to your body as possible. If you have to place the load to your left or to your right, don't twist your body. Move your feet instead. When you have to lower a load, simply reverse the knees bent, back vertical procedure.

Review:

Let's quickly review what we said about lifting:

1. Don't lift more than you can handle. Ask for help with heavy loads.
2. Wear safety shoes.
3. If the object is rough or sharp, wear gloves.
4. Lift with your legs and not your back.
5. Keep the load close to your body.
6. Don't twist your body when placing a load to one side or the other. Move your feet instead.
7. When it comes to lifting, don't break your back. Instead, lift right and give your back a break.

GENERAL SAFETY REVIEW

This is a time to review all safety concerns, not just today's topic. Keep your notes on this page before, during and after the safety meeting.

Are you aware of any safety hazards from any other crews? Point out any hazards other crews are creating that this crew should know about. Tell the crew what you intend to do about those hazards.

Do we have any other safety business? Discuss any past issues or problems. Report any progress of investigations and action taken.

Have there been any accidents, near misses or complaints? Discuss any accidents, near misses, and complaints that have happened since the last safety meeting. Also recognize the safety contributions made by members of the crew.

Please remember, we want to hear from you about any health and safety issues that come up. If we don't know about problems, we can't take action to fix them.

ENDING THE MEETING

Circulate Sign-Off Form.

Assign one or more crew member(s) to help with next safety meeting.

Refer action items for follow-up.

Do you have any Safety Recommendations?

Do you have any Job Specific Topics you would like us to discuss?

Comments:

OSHA Regulations:

Explain: The safety measures we've talked about are included in our company's Safety and Health Program, as required by OSHA. At this time, there are few specific OSHA regulations on back hazards or lifting. However, OSHA did recently adopt a new ergonomics standard designed to reduce repetitive motion injuries. On any job, if there has been more than one ergonomic injury within a year to workers doing the same task, the company must take steps to identify and correct these hazards. We must also provide relevant training. I have a Checklist of recommended safety measures. If you'd like to know more, see me after the meeting.

Company Rules:

(Only if applicable.) We have some additional company rules to prevent back injuries.

Discuss company rules:

Comments from the Crew:

Ask the following: Do you have any other concerns about back injuries or lifting? Do you see any problems on our job? (Let the steward answer first, if there is one.) What about other jobs you've worked on? Have you had any experience with back injuries or lifting that might help us work safer on this job?

SAFETY TALK REVIEW

Hazard Identification:

1. The company has a written Safety and Health Program that meets all OSHA requirements. It includes identification of back hazards on the site, regular inspections, accident investigation, and correction of hazardous conditions.
2. Materials which may present lifting hazards on the job have been identified:
 - Heavy objects (over 20 lbs. if they will be lifted repeatedly; over 50 lbs. at one time). (List below.)
 - Bulky or awkward objects. (List below.)
 - Loads whose weight may suddenly shift. (List below.)
 - Objects which must be lifted from above shoulder level. (List below.)
 - Objects which must be lifted from the floor. (List below.)
 - Objects which cannot be held close to the body. (List below.)

List identified lifting hazards:

3. Tasks which require repeated twisting or bending have been identified. (List below.)

List identified lifting, twisting, or bending hazards:

Back Hazards:

Back injuries and all accidents involving lifting are investigated, and hazards are corrected.

Job Design:

1. When possible, jobs are designed to minimize manual material handling.
2. When possible, mechanical lifting devices (fork lifts, hoists, cranes, and block and tackle) are used.
3. Manual lifting and carrying devices (dollies, hand trucks, pry bars, and hooks) are available and in good condition.
4. Where possible, materials and equipment are used that are easy to lift and carry (for example, bricks with handholds or fiberglass ladders).
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6. Where possible, materials are ordered in small, light quantities (for example, 3-foot drywall or small packages of cement).
7. Lifting tasks are divided among workers to reduce repetitive lifting.
8. Heavy materials which must be lifted manually are stored off the ground, no lower than knee height. (This limits the height of the lifting required, and reduces pressure on the spine.)
9. Heavy materials are stored where there is enough space to lift them safely, without reaching or twisting.

Training:

1. Workers have been trained about all identified lifting hazards on the job, and methods to avoid injury.
2. Workers have been trained in safe lifting techniques, including team lifting and carrying.

Work Practices:

1. Materials are delivered as close as possible to where they will be used.
2. Loads are split up to reduce weight.
3. Walkways are kept clear to allow use of material handling devices like carts and dollies.
4. Mechanical devices or team lifting techniques are used for heavy loads whenever possible.
5. Before lifting and carrying heavy objects, workers plan the task, including resting points if necessary.

6. Workers use the correct grip, test the load before lifting, and lift and hold the load close to the body.
7. Loads are lifted and lowered gradually.
8. Mechanical devices or team lifting techniques are used for heavy loads whenever possible.
9. Lifting belts are provided only if recommended by a qualified physician and if workers have been trained in their proper use.
10. Workers are encouraged to "warm up" at the start of each shift, and to take regular stretch breaks.

Ergonomics:

If there has been more than one ergonomic injury within a year to workers doing the same task, the company has set up a program to identify and correct these hazards and provide relevant training.