

Handling Materials Manually

GENERAL DISCUSSION

At least 400,000 employees suffer disabling back injuries each year in the United States. The resulting medical and compensation bills are a huge drain on national and business resources, but any employee who has experienced a back injury has more personal reasons for avoiding back injuries, namely, pain and possible long-range disability. Yet loads in containers and out of them must be moved at work.

There are no easy answers to back injuries but two approaches to the problem can help reduce back and other injuries caused by overexertion. First, the workplace must be arranged to keep manual materials handling to a minimum. Second, when materials must be moved by hand, keeping some basic safety practices in mind will help to reduce the likelihood of injury.

- To minimize the amount of materials handled, think through the entire route the load will travel at the workplace. Could its path be shortened?
- Think about grouping or combining materials in a different way. For example, could the load be added to several others on a pallet and moved by a forklift truck?
- Could it be broken into units small enough to be moved safely by one person?
- If the size of the load can't be changed, can two people move it instead of one?
- Can handles be attached to it so that it can be more easily moved?

But when handling materials manually, keep certain things in mind to help reduce the risks of injury.

1. Most important, keep the load close to your body. Wear work clothing that is sturdy and washable it will prevent worries about the load roughing up or soiling clothes during the move.
2. Make sure that walking and working surfaces are clean, dry and uncluttered. And wear shoes that give you secure balance and good traction.
3. Carry loads between the height of your knuckles and shoulders whenever possible to reduce the chance of strain and fatigue.
4. Avoid twisting your body.
5. Before moving the load, size it up. Test it for weight and stability.

6. Avoid sudden motions or jerking actions. Try to anticipate and be prepared for any changes of speed or direction in order to avoid overexertion during the lift.
7. Try to slow the frequency of lifts made, and keep any other manual activities such as pushing, pulling, or carrying to a minimum. Operate only with adequate rest.

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:
