



SAFETY COMMUNICATION

Back Injury Prevention

Safety Training Resources



Risk Management
Fund

Back injuries are painful, the recovery process is slow, and they can happen to any one of us. Back injuries and other strains and sprains are the most significant loss area for all departments. This Safety Communication has been developed as a tool to help all managers and supervisors train employees on back injury prevention.

When you think about back injury prevention, you may think of the maintenance employee who regularly lifts heavy materials or the emergency medical technician who lifts patients. But, back injuries happen to all types of employees. We all have a spine, and we all lift loads.

Consider this...On average our upper body weighs about 100 lbs. Even if you're bending over to pick up a pencil, if you don't use proper lifting techniques, you are still lifting the weight of your upper body. At 100 lbs., this puts a 1,000 pounds of pressure on our back!



Lifting is the number one reason for back injuries, but not all back injuries are caused from lifting. Sometimes we are pushing, pulling, twisting, reaching, or carrying.

The following training resources provide information not only on proper lifting techniques, but also on other risk factors that cause back injuries.

Safety Talks

- Ergonomics – Good Lifting
- Ergonomics – Loving Your Back
- Ergonomics - Safe Lifting

OSHA

E Tools for Heavy Lifting

<https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/etools/electricalcontractors/materials/heavy.html>

In addition to employee training, this is also a good time for managers and supervisors to ask:

- Do we have the appropriate mechanical aids to assist with lifting?
- Do we have procedures in place that require team lifts where warranted?
- Have we inspected the condition of our equipment and materials to reduce the force required to push or pull, such as condition of wheels, lubrication, etc.
- Do we have ladders and stepstools available to reduce reaching for items?
- Do we make it a common practice to observe our employees and coach them on good lifting techniques and work practices when needed?