

SAFETY TALK

— Ergonomics

Good Lifting

How you lift is just as important as what you lift. Even a light load can cause injury if lifted improperly. Before you start a lift ask yourself these questions:

ARE YOUR MUSCLES WARMED UP?

If it's 8:00 in the morning and you've just started work, think about warming up your muscles before tackling that lift. Muscles, tendons and ligaments are more flexible after a good warm up.

CAN YOU LIFT THE WEIGHT?

You know your capabilities. If you know something is too heavy to lift, ask for help. If you feel like you're straining, ask for help.

SHOULD YOU USE A CART OR DOLLY?

Yes – if you're transporting materials a long distance, or the load is heavy.

HAVE YOU PLANNED AHEAD?

Are there any obstacles in your path? Is the floor slippery? Where is the best place to grip the load? Know what you are about to lift and how you will lift the object. Be sure to wear good sturdy footwear to keep you stable.



The power zone for lifting is close to the body, between mid-thigh and mid-chest height. Comparable to the strike zone in baseball, this zone is where arms and back can lift the most with the least amount of effort.

The following lifting techniques can help you avoid a back injury:

- Stand as close as possible to the object you are going to lift.
- Position your feet shoulder width apart with one foot slightly behind the other.
- Squat down to the load. Bend at your knees, not at your waist.
- Grip the object firmly with both hands (not just your fingers) and keep your arms and elbows tucked in close to your body for more strength.
- Use handles, if provided.
- Tighten your stomach muscles as you grasp the load securely. Maintain a comfortable position, keeping the normal curve of the lower back.
- Keep your head and chin up as you lift.
- Lift with your legs, they are the strongest muscles.
- Lift smoothly and keep the load close to your body.
- Do not twist your body while carrying objects. If you need to change directions, move your feet in the direction of travel.
- Always push, rather than pull carts and hand trucks, so that less force is placed on your lower back muscles.
- Avoid storing heavy items above shoulder level or below knee level, if possible.
- Modify work practices so workers perform work within their power zone (i.e. above the knees, below the shoulders, and close to the body)