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## ISSUE HIGHLIGHTS:

### Back Injuries...What a Pain!

One of the most common reasons for lost days of work is back injuries. Lifting is involved in every industry and occupation. It does not matter if you are in construction, an office environment, or a service trade, lifting is a part of the job.

Repeated incorrect lifting can result in a variety of injuries. Back strain results from overstretching muscles. Painful herniated discs in the back can also result from incorrect lifting. Using safe lifting techniques can help reduce the possibility of back injuries.

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By properly training your employees and providing them support when lifting, either by equipment or additional manpower, you can reduce the likelihood of injury.

Since no single lifting technique will work in all situations, following the tips below will help avoid back injuries while lifting.

- Size up the load and decide whether you can handle it alone or if help is needed.
- Ask for help if needed to avoid injury.
- Check your intended path of travel for obstacles or other hazards.
- Place your feet at shoulder's width apart and wear good work shoes.
- Bend at the knees – not your waist. Leg muscles are stronger than back muscles. Let your leg muscles do the work.
- Grip the load firmly and use work gloves if necessary.
- Keep the load close to your body. Greater strength and stability occur with the object near the waist.
- Move your feet when you change directions. Do not twist your upper body while carrying or placing the load.

When the lift requires the assistance of a co-worker, these additional tips should be followed:

- Determine in advance who the leader is.
- Plan the lift together.
- Lift and lower in unison and with no sudden moves.
- Communicate with your partner during the entire lift and move.

By being alert when lifting and remembering these safety tips, you can reduce your potential of injury while lifting. If you are ever in doubt about a lift, ask your supervisor or get a co-worker to help you.



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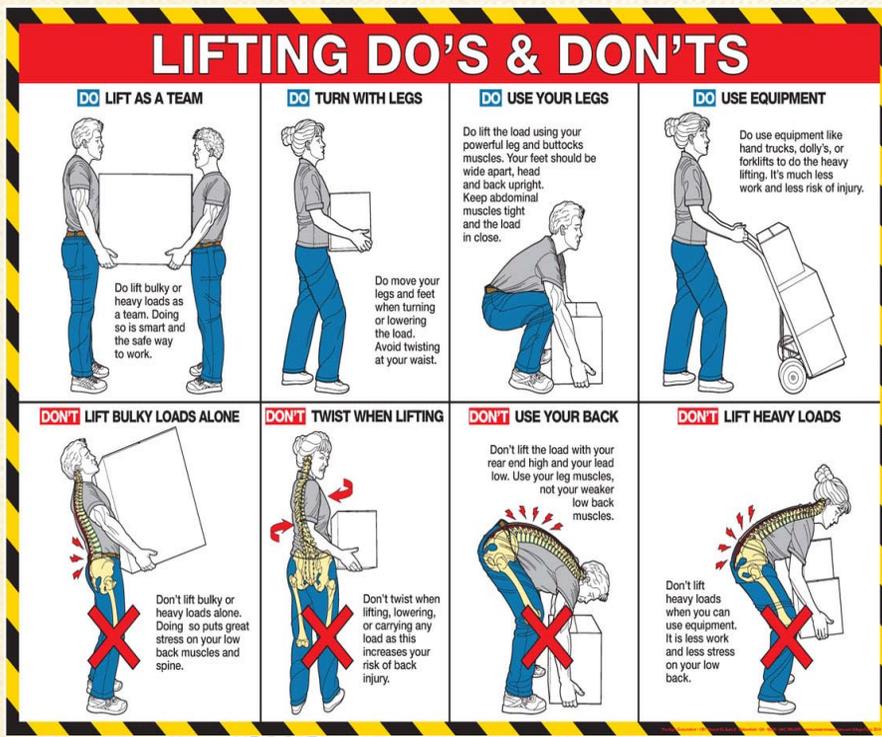
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## WHAT YOU CAN DO:

As an Employer, you can greatly reduce the risk of back strain in your workplace by implementing the following:

- Discuss proper lifting procedures at your next safety meeting. Remember to review these procedures with all new employees at the time of hire.
- Assess your work area for potential lifting hazards. Identifying the hazard and demonstrating proper lifting technique is essential. ([www.MySafetyPoint.com](http://www.MySafetyPoint.com) offers free access to training videos, most of which include a short quiz for your employees.)
- ENFORCEMENT! You may have a great written safety plan, but unless you enforce the content, it means very little.

**Remember...it is much easier to *prevent* a back injury than it is to *repair* a back injury.**



## Preventing Back Injuries

Most back injuries that occur on the job are a result of poor lifting techniques. Manual lifting and carrying of objects should be the last resort whenever possible. When manual lifting cannot be eliminated, completion of the following simple steps will assist in reducing back injuries.

### Inspect Work Areas

Slips and falls cause many back injuries. Make sure that floors are not wet or slippery, housekeeping practices are acceptable, and all stairs, handrails and walking surfaces are properly maintained. Any substandard conditions observed should be corrected in order to reduce the chance of injury.

### Use Mechanical Lifting Devices

Whenever possible, utilize mechanical lifting devices. In addition to reducing injury potential, using material handling equipment will also increase productivity. Lifting capabilities vary by individual; however the potential for injury increases significantly when material to be moved either exceeds 30 pounds or is excessively bulky. Inspect the material handling equipment before each use to ensure it is in proper working order

References: MySafetyPoint Technical Bulletin

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