



## Safety Talk: Back Safety

**Bend your knees to lift**



**Prevent Back Injury**

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, back injuries account for approximately 20% of all work-related injuries. In 2013, the average time spent away from work due to a back injury was seven days.

**Steps to a proper lift:**

1. Plan the lift – size up the load to see if you need some help to lift the object.
2. Stand as close to the object as possible.
3. Keep your feet shoulder-width apart.
4. Tighten your stomach muscles.
5. Bend at the knees.
6. Get a good, firm grip on the load.
7. Hug the load.
8. Lift with your legs.
9. Avoid twisting and awkward movements.
10. When carrying: keep the load between hip and shoulder height.
11. When unloading: bend at your knees and keep your back straight.

### HOW TO PREVENT BACK INJURIES:

- Use proper lifting techniques (see side bar);
- Stretch and warm up muscles in your back before the lift;
- Ask for help if lifting or carrying an object that is too heavy or awkward to handle;
- Use hand carts, lift trucks, pallet jacks, hoists, wheelbarrows, or other mechanical aids to lift or carry heavy/awkward objects;
- Rotate between sitting and standing tasks; and
- Avoid using awkward postures to complete work tasks.

### EXAMPLES OF POOR LIFTING TECHNIQUES:

- Bending at the waist instead of squatting to lift from the floor;
- Twisting while lifting;
- Attempting to lift objects that are too heavy;
- Lifting with forceful, jerky movements;
- Lifting or carrying objects on slippery floors or other poor footing; and
- Repetition of lifting with the poor techniques listed above.

### OTHER CAUSES OF BACK INJURIES:

- Slips, trips, and falls;
- Static and/or poor postures when sitting or standing for long periods of time;
- Fatigue or overuse;
- Vibrations;
- Awkward postures such as bending and/or twisting at the waist; and
- Years of "micro-trauma" caused by improper lifting practices can be a major contributing factor to the injury.



**Teamwork prevents injuries!**

### For more information:

Back Safety and Ergonomics training are required upon employment.

Online Training Available on Chalk!

