

# 1 - Back Protection: Safety Training

EH&S – [REDACTED]

## **Goals: This safety session should teach you to:**

- A. Realize how common lower back pain really is.
- B. Know some things you can do to minimize your risk of back injuries.

## **OSHA Regulations: General Duty Clause Sec. 5 (b)**

### **1. How high is your risk? Ask yourself:**

- A. Does my job require frequent bending and lifting?
- B. Do I have home duties, like caring for an ill family member, or moving heavy furniture, that can strain my back?
- C. Am I overweight?
- D. Do I exercise infrequently?
- E. Do I smoke?
- F. “Yes” answers to these questions mean you may be at an above-average risk for back problems.
- G. Back injuries are among the most common of all injuries. They range from minor muscle strains to serious and permanent damage. Unfortunately, a serious back injury can mean a lifetime of back pain.

### **2. Most of you have heard all this before—you probably know the proper way to lift—but do you follow the rules?**

- A. Estimate whether it is really safe to lift an object by yourself.
- B. Can you use a dolly or handcart to avoid manually lifting the object?
- C. Can someone else assist you?
- D. Plan the lift and get set with feet about shoulder-width apart to give yourself a good base of support.
- E. Get close to the object to be lifted.
- F. Bend your legs - don't bend over at the waist - tighten your stomach muscles, and use your leg muscles to help you lift.

### **3. Follow through with the lift properly.**

- A. Don't twist your body—instead, turn your feet in the direction you want to go.
- B. To place an object on a higher level, move close to the destination, climb on a stepstool if necessary—put the object in place while extending your arms as little as possible.
- C. If you are moving something from a higher level, use a stepstool so the object is not above your shoulder height when you make the actual lift. Dismount carefully and complete the move.

**4. You can reduce your risk factors for back injury.**

- A. Speak to your doctor about starting an exercise or diet program to improve your overall health and fitness level.
- B. Start any program slowly and gradually increase the length and intensity of your workouts.
- C. If you experience pain, heed the warning and stop. If the pain is severe or persists, seek professional advice. If it is mild and goes away quickly, you might simply wait a few days and then try a less strenuous program.
- D. Take action now and quit smoking. Your doctor can offer advice about this as well, and there are many groups in the community ready to assist you.

**5. Analyze your work and home activities to minimize your risk.**

- A. Use dollies or other available lifting devices.
- B. Try to keep all lifting between knuckle height when standing and shoulder height.
- C. Whenever possible, begin your lift with the object in that height range and move to a destination at a similar height.
- D. Lifts that begin or end either at floor height or with an object above your shoulders are the most likely to cause injury or back stress.

**Summation: Protect your back!**

Knowing the rules about safe lifting is the first step. The most important second step, however, is applying this knowledge to your everyday activities.