

# Handling Materials Manually

## A SAFETY TALK FOR DISCUSSION LEADERS

This safety talk is designed for discussion leaders to use in preparing safety meetings.

Set a specific time and date for your safety meeting. Publicize your meeting so everyone involved will be sure to attend.

Review this safety talk before the meeting and become familiar with its content. Make notes about the points made in this talk that pertain to your workplace. You should be able to present the material in your own words and lead the discussion without reading it.

Seating space is not absolutely necessary, but arrangements should be made so that those attending can easily see and hear the presentation.

Collect whatever materials and props you will need ahead of time. Try to use equipment in your workplace to demonstrate your points.

## DURING THE MEETING

Give the safety talk in your own words. Use the printed talk merely as a guide.

The purpose of a safety meeting is to initiate discussion of safety problems and provide solutions to those problems. Encourage employees to discuss hazards or potential hazards they encounter on the job. Ask them to suggest ways to improve safety in their area.

Don't let the meeting turn into a gripe session about unrelated topics. As discussion leader, it's your job to make sure the topic is safety. Discussing other topics wastes time and can ruin the effectiveness of your safety meeting.

At the end of the meeting, ask employees to sign a sheet on the back of this talk as a record that they attended the safety meeting. Keep this talk on file for your records.

## Handling Materials Manually

At least 400,000 employees suffer disabling back injuries each year in the United States. The resulting medical and compensation bills are a huge drain on national and business resources, but any employee who has experienced a back injury has more personal reasons for avoiding back injuries, namely, pain and possible long-range disability. Yet loads in containers and out of them must be moved at work. So what's the answer?

There is no single answer, but two approaches to the problem can help reduce back and other injuries caused by overexertion. First, the workplace must be arranged to keep manual materials handling to a minimum. Second, when materials must be moved by hand, keeping some basic safety practices in mind will help to reduce the likelihood of injury.

To minimize the amount of materials handled, think through the entire route the load will travel at the workplace. Could its path be shortened?

Think about grouping or combining materials in a different way. For example, could the load be added to several others on a pallet and moved by a forklift truck?

Could it be broken into units small enough to be moved safely by one person?

If the size of the load can't be changed, can two people move it instead of one?

Can handles be attached to it so that it can be more easily moved?

But when handling materials manually, keep certain things in mind to help reduce the risks of injury.

- Most important, keep the load close to your body. Wear work clothing that is sturdy and washable--it will prevent worries about the load roughing up or soiling clothes during the move.
- Make sure that walking and working surfaces are clean, dry and uncluttered. And wear shoes that give you secure balance and good traction.
- Carry loads between the height of your knuckles and shoulders whenever possible to reduce the chance of strain and fatigue.
- Avoid twisting your body.
- Before moving the load, size it up. Test it for weight and stability.

- Avoid sudden motions or jerking actions. Try to anticipate and be prepared for any changes of speed or direction in order to avoid overexertion during the lift.
- Try to slow the frequency of lifts made, and keep any other manual activities such as pushing, pulling, or carrying to a minimum. Operate only with adequate rest.