

## News & Notes

### CONTROLS TO PREVENT BACK INJURIES

There are two types of controls that may help prevent lifting injuries: engineering and administrative. Engineering controls are used to redesign the workstation to minimize lifting hazards. Administrative controls include carefully selecting and training workers so that they can perform their jobs safely.

#### Suggested engineering controls include:

- Redesigning the weight being lifted to help make it easier to lift the item with the presence of handles, use of baskets and the stability of the package being handled.
- Adjusting the height of the object being moved.
- Installing mechanical aids such as pneumatic lifts, conveyors and/or automated material handling equipment.

#### Suggested administrative controls include:

- Strength testing of existing workers: Studies have shown strength testing can prevent up to one-third of all work-related injuries. Through the strength-testing process, employers can discourage employees from performing tasks that exceed their strength capacities.
- Physical conditioning or stretching programs: These programs are implemented to reduce the risk of muscle strain.
- Training: Employees should be trained to utilize proper lifting techniques that place minimum stress on the lower back.



"I remember a time when he used to hug me like that."

### RIDDLES OF THE MONTH

- 1) Who says sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me?
- 2) How do you make fire with two sticks?
- 3) What is the most slippery country?
- 4) Why can't you say a joke while standing on ice?
- 5) Why did the orange stop in the middle of the hill?

Answers on page 2 Safety Bits & Pieces



# Safety Matters

Produced by the Insurance Coverage Office



State of Delaware

Issue CXXVIII

April 2017

## LIFTING SAFELY

Before lifting, take a moment to think about what you are about to do. Examine the object for sharp corners, slippery spots or other potential hazards. Know your limit and do not try to exceed it. Ask for help if needed. Or if possible, divide the load to make it lighter. Know where you are going to set the item down and make sure the destination and your path are free of obstructions. Then follow these steps.



**1. Stand close to the load with your feet spread shoulder width apart. One foot should be slightly in front of the other for balance.**



**2. Squat down, bending at the knees (not your waist). Tuck your chin while keeping your back as vertical as possible.**



**3. Get a firm grasp of the object before beginning the lift.**



**4. Slowly begin straightening your legs, lifting slowly. Never twist your body during this step.**



**5. Once the lift is complete, keep the object as close to the body as possible. If the load's center of gravity moves away from your body, there is a dramatic increase in stress to the lumbar region of the back and the chance for back injuries increases dramatically.**

If you must turn while carrying the load, turn using your feet, not your torso. To place the object below the level of your waist, follow the same procedures in reverse order. Remember to keep your back as vertical as possible, and bend at the knees.

### Conclusion

Using proper lifting techniques can help prevent downtime due to avoidable back injuries. With a little practice, precautionary methods such as these can become good daily habits that could help prevent back injuries both on and off the job. A substantial portion of back lifting injuries can be prevented by incorporating effective administrative and engineering controls ( please see sidebar article).

### SAFETY TIPS OF THE MONTH

As the weather improves, practice these outside hazard safety tips:

- 1) Wear safety goggles, sturdy shoes, and long pants when using any equipment.
- 2) Protect your hearing by wearing hearing protection. A good rule to follow is if you have to raise your voice to talk with someone an arm's length away, the noise could be potentially harmful to your hearing and hearing protection should be used.
- 3) Always wear gloves to protect from skin irritants, cuts and contaminants.
- 4) Follow instructions and warning labels on chemicals and lawn/garden equipment.
- 5) Reduce the risk of sunburn and skin cancer by wearing long sleeves, a wide-brimmed hat and sunshades. Use sunscreen with an SPF of 15 or higher.
- 6) When working in hot weather drink plenty of fluids, but not those that contain alcohol or large amounts of sugar, as they can cause you to lose body fluid.
- 7) Pay attention to signs of heat-related illness, including high body temperature, headache, dizziness, rapid pulse, nausea, confusion or unconsciousness.
- 8) Take frequent breaks to rest and keep yourself hydrated.

## Safety Bits & Pieces

### BACK BELT RECOMMENDATIONS

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), more than one million workers suffer back injuries each year, and back injuries account for one of every five workplace injuries. Many of these injuries are caused by poor lifting techniques, bad posture, and carrying too much body weight.

One common myth is that a back belt can help protect your back from injury. In fact, not only are they *not* required by the Occupational Health and Safety Administration (OSHA), they aren't even recommended. Using a back support doesn't prevent someone from performing a task improperly. In fact, back supports may create a false sense of security, leading to injury by encouraging excessive heavy lifting and weakened muscles. Although they may ease the pain of a pre-existing back injury and provide a sense of support or comfort to the user, the most important fact about back belts is that they do not allow for the user to lift more or disregard safe lifting practices.

Back supports are meant to be a supplemental, not a primary strategy for protecting your back and improving workplace safety. A better plan, as proposed by OSHA, is to strengthen the back with exercises and an ergonomic workplace strategy that discourages unsafe lifting, twisting, bending, and reaching.

The next time a friend, co-worker, or family member thinks that a back belt will prevent back injuries, tell them to think again. If a back belt is to be worn, the user must acknowledge that the belt is there for guidance only and does not substitute for unsafe lifting practices. Remember, once your back goes, it may never come back.

### RIDDLES OF THE MONTH ANSWERS

- 1) Someone who has never been hit with a dictionary.
- 2) Make sure one is a match.
  - 3) Greece
- 4) Because it might crack up!
- 5) It ran out of juice.

### ON THE LIGHTER SIDE



"Daddy and I had to use your college fund. But on a positive note, you won't have to worry about good grades anymore."

### QUOTATION OF THE MONTH

*Have a heart that  
never hardens  
A temper that  
never tires,  
and a touch that  
never hurts.*  
Charles Dickens

# MOVE RIGHT FOR SIRENS AND LIGHTS

If you or someone you love is in need of emergency assistance, you want help to arrive immediately. Did you know that there's one simple thing everyone can do to help firefighters, ambulances, and law enforcement officers provide emergency assistance as quickly as possible? Just **Move Right for Sirens & Lights**.

Every year in the United States there are 16,000 collisions involving fire department emergency vehicles responding to or returning from incidents. These collisions result in over 1,000 firefighter injuries and 50 deaths. Many, if not most, of these accidents would be avoided if everyone would just **Move Right for Sirens & Lights**.

Why, then, doesn't everyone just pull to the right? Many people panic. Some don't know or understand the law. Others simply don't adhere to the rules of the road.

The law is very specific: Drivers must yield the right-of-way to an emergency vehicle. Firefighters work hard to avoid vehicle collisions by driving slowly when traveling against traffic, coming to a complete stop at intersections, etc. However, the cooperation of ALL vehicles on the roadway is essential.

### SIMPLE RULES

There are some simple rules to follow when you're on the road and encounter an emergency vehicle whose lights are flashing, whether the siren is sounding or not.

**DO** pull to the right and come to a complete stop. If you're traveling on a high-speed road or if there is no room to stop, slow down as much as possible.

If you are in the left lane, **DO** pull over into the right lane as traffic in the lane to your right moves over.

If you cannot move to the right because of another vehicle or obstacle, just stop.

Your action will let the driver of the emergency vehicle know what you are doing and allow the driver to anticipate where to drive.

When an emergency vehicle approaches you from behind while you are stopped at an intersection, **DO** stay where you are unless you can pull to the right.

On a two or four-lane highway or street without barriers, both sides of traffic should pull to the right.

If the emergency vehicle is traveling on the opposite direction of a divided highway or street, you do not need to pull over.

If you are on a divided highway where traffic in front of you is at a standstill and you see emergency lights behind you, move to the right if you can; stay where you are if you can't. **NEVER** move into the center divider—you could be moving into the path of an approaching emergency vehicle.

**DO** stay at least 500 feet behind any emergency vehicle.

**DO** be extremely careful when driving by or around a motor vehicle accident or any situation where emergency vehicles are parked and the firefighters are working.

**DO NOT** move to the left (**Exception:** when emergency vehicles are on the right shoulder, then you must pull over to the left whenever possible.)

**DO NOT** play your radio so loudly that you are unable to hear sirens.

**DO NOT** stop in the middle lane when there is room to pull to the right.

**DO NOT** pull to the left into the center lane, the center divider, or left turn lane.

**DO NOT** race ahead to make the green light or turn before the emergency vehicle gets there.

**DO NOT** turn quickly to the left onto a street or driveway.

**DO NOT** drive through a red light or stop sign when an emergency vehicle approaches from behind.

**DO NOT** disregard the presence of the emergency vehicle by continuing to drive.

Following these simple rules will help everyone involved in an emergency: those who desperately need help and those who are hurrying to help them. Every emergency responder—firefighter, ambulance driver, police officer—will appreciate it when you **Move Right for Sirens & Lights**.

