Get A Lift Out Of Your Job

Workers in health care, warehousing, transportation, manufacturing, retail and many other industry sectors have to lift and move people and materials as part of their jobs. All of us have to do a certain amount of lifting to care for our families, homes and other responsibilities.

Safe lifting techniques are an important part of safety training for anyone. Back injuries can be painful, disabling and very costly. Learn to lift correctly to prevent back injuries which occur suddenly or develop over a period of time.

The most important point to remember when you are lifting is to protect your spine. Let your strong legs and arms handle the load, not your back. If necessary, get help from co-workers or use a lifting device.

Here are some guidelines for safer lifting:

- Size up the item before attempting to lift it. Determine its size and shape. Check the weight listed on the packaging, or tilt up one corner to estimate the weight. Determine if you can safely move it alone, or if you need help.
- Also read the label to determine if you need any Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to handle the material. Wearing gloves and safety shoes is always a good idea. You might also need protective eyewear, chemical-resistant clothing or even respiratory protection to move some materials. Talk to your supervisor if you have any questions or concerns.
- Establish firm footing. Place your feet shoulder-width apart with your toes pointed out and one foot slightly ahead of the other.
- Get as close to the load as possible so you do not have to stretch or twist your body to reach it.
- Crouch down. Bend your knees, not your waist or your back.
- Get a good grip on the object, using the handles if available.
- Stand up and lift the load by straightening your legs. Keep

your stomach muscles tight to support your spine.

- As you carry the item, keep it close to your body.
- Make sure you can see over or around the load. Be wary of rough or slippery floor surfaces.
- Don’t twist your body. If you must turn, move your feet in the new direction first.
- When setting the item down, bend your knees and not your back. Also take care to protect your hands from being crushed by the load.
- Get help with heavy or bulky items. When doing a lift as a team, designate one person as team leader to tell the others when to lift and when to set down the load.
- Use a hand cart if necessary, or call for a forklift.

FINAL WORD

No matter what industry you work in, try to minimize the need for lifting. Arrange your work area so you do not have to twist your body, reach forward or backward to reach materials. Frequently-used supplies should be stored at waist height. Eliminate repetitive lifting by reorganizing the way you work and by obtaining mechanical help.