Lifting, moving and carting luggage safely Meeting Kit

WHAT’S AT STAKE

Lifting luggage in hospitality puts workers at risk of musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) like back pain and injuries. These can lead to chronic pain, disability, and even lost wages. Additionally, improper lifting techniques can cause immediate strains and pulled muscles. This can strain the workforce, impacting staff availability.

WHAT’S THE DANGER

Hospitality workers, particularly those in roles like porters, housekeepers, and bellhops, face significant dangers and risks associated with lifting, moving, and carting luggage. These tasks can lead to various hazards, potential injuries, and long-term health consequences.

Dangers:

- **Musculoskeletal Disorders (MSDs):** This is the most common danger associated with manual luggage handling. Repetitive lifting, awkward postures, and uneven weight distribution strains muscles, tendons, and ligaments. Over time, this repetitive stress can cause:
    - Chronic pain in the back, neck, and shoulders.
    - Reduced mobility and flexibility.
    - Joint damage and inflammation.
    - Increased risk of developing conditions like arthritis and osteoporosis.
- **Sprains and Strains:** Sudden movements, lifting heavy objects, or improper lifting techniques can lead to immediate injuries. This includes:
    - Pulled muscles and ligaments.

        - Sprains in the ankles, knees, and wrists.
        - Muscle tears requiring medical attention and potentially leading to long-term limitations.
    - **Disc Injuries:** The spine, particularly the lower back, is highly vulnerable during lifting. The pressure exerted on the discs while lifting heavy objects can cause herniated discs and degenerative disc disease.

Hazards:

- **Unevenly weighted luggage:** Suitcases and bags often contain unevenly distributed weight, placing additional stress on one side of the body during lifting.
- **Inadequate training:** Lack of proper training in safe lifting techniques increases the risk of injury.
- **Long working hours:** Fatigue can significantly decrease a worker's ability to handle heavy loads safely, further increasing the risk of injury.

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

Protecting Hospitality Workers from Luggage Handling Risks: Preventive Measures and Safe Practices

Training and Education:

- **Mandatory Safe Lifting Techniques Training**: All staff involved in luggage handling should undergo comprehensive training on proper body mechanics and safe lifting postures.
- **Invest in Ergonomic Equipment:**
    - **Luggage Carts and Dollies:** These tools significantly reduce the physical strain on workers by allowing them to transport luggage without manual lifting.
    - **Lifting straps and belts:** These can provide additional support and stability during lifting tasks.
    - **Adjustable workstations:** For housekeepers and cleaning staff, adjustable workbenches can minimize the need for awkward bending and reaching while handling luggage.
- **Weight Limits and Signage:** Establish and display the maximum

weight a single worker can safely lift. This helps prevent overloading and potential injuries.

Work Environment and Practices:

- **Eliminate Clutter:** Maintain clear walkways and designated luggage storage areas to minimize the risk of slips, trips, and falls.
- **Improve Lighting:** Ensure adequate lighting throughout the work environment to enhance visibility and prevent accidents.
- **Implement Time Management Strategies:** Schedule sufficient time for handling luggage to avoid rushing and compromising proper lifting techniques.

Individual Worker Responsibility:

- **Utilize proper lifting techniques:** Workers should be trained and encouraged to:
  - Bend at the knees, not the waist.
  - Keep the back straight and core engaged.
  - Avoid twisting the spine.
  - Utilize leg muscles for lifting and lowering.
  - Seek assistance for excessively heavy luggage.
- **Report any pain or discomfort:** Workers should be encouraged to report any pain or discomfort experienced while handling luggage. Early intervention can prevent further injury and facilitate timely medical attention.
- **Stay Hydrated and Take Breaks:** Adequate hydration and regular breaks throughout the workday help prevent fatigue, which can increase the risk of injury.

FINAL WORD

By implementing these preventive measures, hospitality establishments can significantly reduce the risk of injuries associated with luggage handling. Creating a safety-conscious work environment protects the well-being of employees and minimizes operational disruptions due to staff injuries.