

Preventing Lifting Injuries – Hospitality Safety Meeting Kit

WHAT'S AT STAKE

Preventing lifting injuries in hospitality is critical. Workers in hotels, restaurants, and other service industries frequently handle heavy objects, from luggage to banquet supplies. Improper lifting techniques can lead to debilitating back injuries, strains, and muscle tears. Staff absences due to injury lead to increased healthcare costs, lower productivity, and potential staffing shortages that can disrupt operations and customer service.

WHAT'S THE DANGER

Lifting injuries are a serious concern for many workers, especially hospitality workers. Most common lifting injuries:

- **Sprains and strains:** These are the most common types of lifting injuries. They occur when muscles, tendons, or ligaments are stretched or torn beyond their capacity. Symptoms of sprains and strains include pain, swelling, bruising, and difficulty moving the affected area.
- **Back injuries:** The back is especially vulnerable to lifting injuries, as it supports the weight of the body and the object being lifted. Back injuries can range from mild muscle strain to herniated discs, which can cause pain, numbness, and weakness.
- **Shoulder injuries:** The shoulder is another common site of lifting injuries. Rotator cuff injuries, which involve tears in the tendons or muscles that surround the shoulder joint, can cause pain, weakness, and difficulty moving the arm.
- **Knee injuries:** Knees can be injured when lifting heavy objects, especially if proper form is not used. Meniscus tears and ligament sprains are common knee injuries that can

cause pain, swelling, and instability.

If you experience any pain or discomfort after lifting, it is important to see a doctor to get a diagnosis and treatment plan.

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

Here are some key steps to take to prevent lifting injuries in the workplace:

- **Training:** Provide comprehensive training to employees on proper lifting techniques. This training should cover topics such as how to assess the weight of an object, how to maintain good posture, and how to use mechanical aids.
- **Planning and Organization:** Organize the workspace to minimize lifting distances and awkward postures. Store frequently lifted objects at waist height whenever possible.
- **Use Mechanical Aids:** Encourage workers to use mechanical aids whenever possible, such as dollies, handcarts, forklifts, and pallet jacks.
- **Teamwork:** When lifting heavy objects, encourage teamwork. Workers should lift together using a coordinated effort to avoid placing undue stress on any one person's back.
- **Proper Posture:** When lifting, keep the back straight, knees bent, and the load close to the body. Avoid twisting or bending at the waist.
- **Assessment:** Encourage workers to assess the weight of an object before lifting it. If an object is too heavy or awkward to lift safely, they should ask for help.

By following these tips, businesses can create a safer work environment for their employees and reduce the risk of lifting injuries.

Implementing proper lifting techniques is essential in the hospitality industry to prevent injuries among workers who frequently engage in lifting tasks. Here are some safety lifting techniques specifically tailored for hospitality settings:

1. Assess the Load: Before lifting any object, assess its weight

and size. If an item is too heavy or bulky to lift safely, seek assistance or use mechanical aids such as dollies, carts, or lifting straps.

2. Use Proper Body Mechanics:

- Stand close to the object with your feet shoulder-width apart for stability.
- Bend at the knees, not the waist, to squat down to the object.
- Keep your back straight and maintain a natural curve in your spine.
- Engage your core muscles to support your back.
- Grip the object securely with both hands, using a palm-to-palm grip if possible.

3. Lift with Your Legs: Power the lift primarily from your legs rather than your back. Push through your heels as you straighten your legs to lift the object, keeping it close to your body.

4. Avoid Twisting: When lifting or carrying an object, avoid twisting your torso. Instead, pivot your entire body with your feet to change direction.

5. Break Downloads: If lifting multiple items or heavy loads, break them down into smaller, more manageable loads whenever possible. This reduces the risk of strain and injury.

Here's what to do if a worker sustains a lifting injury in a hospitality workplace:

Immediate Care:

- **Stop the Activity:** The injured worker should immediately stop lifting or any activity that might worsen the injury.
- **Seek Medical Attention:** Depending on the severity, encourage the worker to see a doctor or go to the emergency room.
- **Report the Injury:** Ensure the worker reports the injury to a supervisor or manager following the established protocol. This is crucial for documentation and potential workers' compensation claims.

FINAL WORD

Building safe lifting habits into your daily routine is key to preventing injuries. With a little practice, proper lifting techniques will become automatic, allowing you to work efficiently and safely. Remember, your health is your most asset.