



COMPANY HEALTH & SAFETY PROGRAM

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1.0 **PURPOSE**

The purpose of this section is to create awareness among employees of back injury hazards, and to provide procedures that may help employees avoid back injuries.

2.0 **SCOPE**

This plan includes back injury hazards, safe lifting techniques, alternative material-handling techniques, other safe work techniques, and back safety issues other than lifting.

3.0 **INDEX TO SECTION**

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- 4.0 Safe Lifting Technique
- 5.0 Alternative Material-Handling Techniques
- 6.0 Other Safe Work Techniques
- 7.0 Other Back Safety Issues
- 8.0 Training
- 8.1 Back Safety Plan Employee Handout
- 9.0 Responsibilities

4.0 **SAFE LIFTING TECHNIQUES**

The following points outline good lifting practices and procedures and safe lifting techniques that may be taught to employees to minimize their risk of back injury and pain. These practices are written with the lifter in mind. Lifting remains an important function despite the level of mechanization found on job sites today. Attention must be directed toward safe lifting practices.

The basics of good lifting include:

1. Size up the load before you lift. Test by lifting one of the corners or pushing. If it's heavy or feels too clumsy, get a mechanical aid or help from another worker. When in doubt, don't lift alone!



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2. BEND THE KNEES. There is a reason that was capitalized. It is the single most important aspect of lifting.
3. When performing the lift:
 - a. Place your feet close to the object and center yourself over the load.
 - b. Get a good handhold.
 - c. Lift straight up smoothly and let your legs do the work, not your back!
 - d. Avoid overreaching or stretching to pick up or set down a load.
4. Do not twist or turn your body once you have made a lift.
5. Make sure beforehand you have a clear path to carry the load.
6. Set the load down using the same body positioning precautions as when lifting.
7. Always push, not pull, the object when possible.
8. Change the lifting situation, if possible, to minimize a lifting hazard:
 - a. If it's a long load, get some help.
 - b. Split the load into several smaller ones when you can, to achieve manageable lifting weight.
 - c. Avoid lifts from below the knees or above the shoulders by positioning yourself so that the object to move is within an acceptable lifting range (between the shoulders and knees) and/or get help from co-workers. Utilize mechanical aids when appropriate.



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5.0 ALTERNATIVE MATERIAL-HANDLING TECHNIQUES

Alternative material-handling techniques for carrying or moving loads are to be used whenever possible to minimize lifting and bending requirements. These alternative techniques include use of:

1. Hoists;
2. Forklifts;
3. Dollies;
4. Carts; and
5. Other mechanical devices or construction equipment available and appropriate for the lift in question.

6.0 OTHER SAFE WORK TECHNIQUES

Work issues other than lifting may be related to back pain or injury. You can avoid them or improve work techniques related to them.

1. Catching Objects & Working Low – When catching falling or tossed objects, your feet should be firmly planted, with your back straight and your knees slightly bent. Your legs should absorb the impact, not your back. If you're working on something low, bend your knees. Keep your back as straight as possible. Bending from the waist can lead to back pain. If you have to use your back, keep your knees bent and your back flat. In both of these situations, frequent rest breaks are necessary to keep from getting back fatigue.
2. Extended Sitting/Standing – Certain jobs require long hours of standing or sitting. These conditions can create back troubles. Get up and stretch frequently if you are required to sit for long periods. If standing, ease the strain on your lower back by changing foot positions often, placing one foot on a rail or ledge. However, keep your weight evenly balanced when standing. Don't lean to one side.



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3. Other Material Handling Tasks – In addition to lifting, tasks such as lowering, pushing, pulling, and carrying can create hazards to the back. If the task feels uncomfortable or unnatural, utilize the alternative material-handling techniques listed under subtitle 5.0 of this plan.
4. Housekeeping – Poor Housekeeping, such as slippery floors or ground, crowded work conditions and tools or other hazards on the work surface can create slip, trip or fall hazards that can result in back injury.
5. Poor Posture at Work – Be aware of proper posture when sitting, standing or reclining. When sitting, your knees should be slightly higher than your hips and your shoulders and upper back should be straight. When lying down or sleeping, keep your knees slightly bent. Sleeping on your stomach can lead to backache.
6. Poor Lighting – Poor lighting in the work area can lead to injuries of many types, including back injuries. Make sure lighting is adequate for the task at hand and for walkways.

7.0 OTHER BACK SAFETY ISSUES

There are factors sometimes unrelated to work that can affect back safety, including such things as physical condition and posture, athletic or home-improvement activity, tension and stress.

1. Posture – Whether you're standing, sitting or reclining, posture affects the amount of strain put on your back. The wrong posture increases strain on the back muscles and may bend the spine into positions that will cause trouble. When standing correctly, the spine has a natural "S" curve. The shoulders are back and the "S" curve is directly over the pelvis. Good sitting posture should put your knees slightly higher than your hips. Your hips should be to the rear of the chair with your lower back not overly arched. Also, your shoulders and your back should not be rounded. Reclining posture is important too. Sleep on your side with knees bent or sleep on your back. Sleeping on your stomach, especially on a sagging mattress with your head on a thick pillow, puts too much strain on the spine, which can result in morning backache.



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2. Poor Physical Condition – Poor physical condition can lead to back pain. Extra strain on your spine results if you are overweight and especially if you have developed a potbelly. It is estimated that every extra pound up front puts 10 pounds of strain on your back. When you are out of shape, the chances for chronic back pain are greater. Infrequent exercise is a major factor too. A sudden strain on generally unused back muscles leads to trouble, particularly when there is a sudden twisting or turning of the back. Proper diet and exercise is the sensible way to avoid back problems.
3. Stress – Stress is another factor that may lead to back pain. Tied in with your general physical condition, stress created from work or play can cause muscle spasms that affect the spinal nerve network. Although stress is part of everyone's life, and a certain amount of stress is normal, excessive stress may cause backache. The solution is a balanced lifestyle with time to relax.
4. Repetitive Trauma – People often think back injuries result from lifting heavy or awkward objects. Many back injuries, however, do not come from a single lift, but occur from relatively minor strains over time. Back injuries, as with other cumulative trauma disorder (CTD), may arise from repeated injuries. As the worker repeats a particular irritating movement, the minor injuries begin to accumulate and weaken affected muscles or ligaments. Eventually a more serious injury may occur. Thus, a specific weight lifted may actually have little to do with any single injury. Whenever you lift anything, remember to use good lifting techniques. Use mechanical aids when appropriate. You can lift safely when the lift is performed with caution.



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8.0 TRAINING

Back safety training shall be accomplished by inserting “Back Safety” into the company’s weekly site employee safety meeting outline under “Special Topics”. This will be done periodically, as determined by the safety director, or can be done by a site superintendent or site safety representative if they feel that the topic is pertinent or needed for their project. The Back Safety Plan, or parts of it, can be reviewed with employees as part of the weekly safety meeting. When this plan is used for training, copies of Back Safety Plan Employee Handout Sheets (attached at Item 8.1 of this section) may be distributed to the attending employees. At a minimum of once a year, Back Safety, Safe Lifting Techniques, or some other title pertaining to the back safety topic shall be used as the primary topic for the company’s weekly safety meeting.

8.1 EMPLOYEE HANDOUT SHEETS

- [Form S.BS.2 – Back Safety Plan Employee Handout \(attached\)](#)

9.0 RESPONSIBILITIES

1. It is the responsibility of the safety director to ensure that this plan is implemented and the information necessary to carry out this plan is communicated to project supervisors.
2. Project supervisors shall be responsible to watch out for and correct unsafe techniques and hazards that could lead to back injuries. Also, they shall incorporate the topic of Back Safety into weekly safety meetings when suggested by the safety director, or whenever events deem it appropriate.
3. It is the responsibility of all employees to follow safe work practices and to heed the information supplied to them by this plan.
4. The effectiveness of the Back Safety Plan depends upon the active support and involvement of all employees.



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REVISION HISTORY

Revision number	Description of change	Written by	Checked by	Effective date
	Program reviewed and Revision History added		GMN	10/20/2014