

Talks **ZONE**

Safety Talks
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T4112

Lift, move and place properly

You will have to look very hard to find a job that does not involve some handling of materials. Whether lifting, lowering, pushing, pulling or carrying, even the simplest task has some potential for injury.

Manual materials handling (MMH) accounts for a large percentage of workplace injuries, which frequently involve strains and sprains of the back, arms and shoulders. The major cause of such injuries is unnecessary or excessive body motions while bending, twisting and reaching.

A load may be hazardous because of:

- Weight
- Size
- Shape (making it awkward to handle)
- Type of grip on the load
- Slippery or damaged surfaces
- Lack of or inappropriate handles
- Imbalance

A material handling task that involves lifting or lowering can be hazardous when it is done repetitively, quickly, while seated or kneeling — even soon after a period of rest.

Problems also can arise from:

- Inability to get close to the load.
- Moving the load over large distances.
- Materials positioned too low or too high.
- Hazardous movements or postures.
- Multiple handling requirements (lifting, carrying, unloading).

Workplace conditions, such as temperature, humidity, lighting, noise, obstacles, floor surfaces and time constraints can affect how safely materials are moved.

Also important are your health and physical capabilities.

What you're wearing is another important factor in reducing the risk of injury. Clothing should be lightweight, flexible and resistant to tears and



punctures. Don't wear aprons or coats or clothing with exposed buttons, zippers or loose flaps. Depending on the material being handled, it could be necessary to wear protective gloves and safety boots with toe caps and non-slip soles.

With most manual material handling jobs, the most important consideration is how to lift and lower objects safely. Know in advance where you are going to set the load down and whether stairs or ramps are involved. Make sure the entire path is free of obstructions or slipping hazards.

Lifting

- Face the load with feet about shoulder-width apart, one slightly ahead of the other.
- Bend at the knees and keep the back straight (in a slightly forward lean), with chin tucked in so the neck and head follow the same straight line.
- Grasp the load and draw it close to the body, with arms and elbows tucked to the sides.
- Lift gradually and smoothly, using the leg muscles, not the back muscles.
- Avoid twisting and side-bending while lifting.

Carrying

- Move steadily and slowly, keeping the load close to the body and balanced.
- Turn the entire body when changing direction. This can avoid severe strain.
- Adjust the grip or turn the load slightly when walking through doorways or between machines so fingers won't be trapped between surfaces.

To lower the load, reverse the lifting steps: bending the knees, keeping the back line straight and the feet in the proper position.

Here are some more MMH safety suggestions:

- Get a secure grip.
 - Use both hands whenever possible. When carrying load with one hand, alternate hands throughout the carry.
 - Push, rather than pull.
 - Use mechanical aids if possible.
 - Reduce the weight of the load by limiting capacity (using smaller containers, for example).
 - Get help. A major contributing factor in lifting-related injuries is the weight and bulkiness of the objects being lifted.
 - Avoid storing materials directly on the floor. Use table or shelving so loads can be placed no lower than knuckle height.
 - Use a ladder for overhead loads.
- Some MMH tasks — moving barrels and drums, for example — require specialized techniques and/or equipment. Not knowing or ignoring them can result in severe injury.

The Quiz

These questions are meant to help you remember what was discussed today — not to test your patience or challenge your intelligence. The answers are at the bottom of the page. Cover them up, and complete the quiz as quickly as you can.

1. Simple material handling tasks have the potential for injury.
TRUE ____ FALSE ____
2. Can the shape of a load make it hazardous?
YES ____ NO ____
3. Which of these are factors that can make lifting or lowering a load hazardous:
 - A. Inability to get close to it.
 - B. Moving it over large distance.
 - C. Time of day.
 - D. Poor posture.
 - E. All of the above
4. Wearing aprons and heavy coats will make material handling easier.
TRUE ____ FALSE ____
5. Which of these is NOT a proper lifting technique:
 - A. Face the load with feet about shoulder-width apart.
 - B. Bend at the waist and keep back vertical.
 - C. Use leg muscles to lift, not the arms and back.
 - D. Avoid twisting as you lift.
6. To lower a load, the lifting steps should be used in reverse.
TRUE ____ FALSE ____
7. Which of these are safe manual material handling procedures:
 - A. Get a secure grip and use both hands.
 - B. Push rather than pull if possible.
 - C. Use mechanical aids or get help for heavy loads.
 - D. Reduce the weight of a load by using smaller containers.
 - E. All of the above.
8. Does your workplace have mechanical devices to make material handling easier and safer?
YES ____ NO ____ DON'T KNOW ____

ANSWERS: 1. True, 2. Yes, 3. A., B., D., 4. False, 5. B., 6. True, 7. E., 8. Your answer

Hold These Thoughts

Handling sheet material such as glass, metal, drywall and wood products is always difficult and hazardous.

For starters, it is always wise to wear appropriate personal protective equipment, especially safety shoes or boots to prevent materials falling on your feet.

When lifting sheet material:

- Stand close to the pile of sheets in a walking stance.
- Grasp the sheet firmly at the mid-point of its long side with the closer hand.
- Pull the sheet up and toward the body.
- Change grip using your other hand and put your fingers on top of the sheet.
- Pull the sheet up to the vertical position and to the side until one half is off the pile.
- Grasp the lower edge of the sheet with the free hand and support the hand by placing it on your knee.
- Stand up without bending and twisting body.

When carrying the load:

- If possible, use drywall carts to carry sheet materials.
- Get help from another person where carts are not available.
- Apply carrying handles for manual carrying.
- Grasp the carrying handles firmly when carrying the load.
- Always use gloves and carrying handle for glass and other materials with sharp edges.
- Make sure the pathway is clear and has no obstructions.

Sheet materials should be stored at a convenient height above ground.

For the Record

Date of Meeting: _____

Topic: _____

Location: _____

Department: _____

Start Time: _____ Finish Time: _____

Meeting Leader: _____

In Attendance:

Tips for Safety Meeting Leaders

Don't just read the Safety Talk. Nothing will turn off an audience faster than a speaker droning away with his or her nose in a paper. Our safety talks are used best as a guide, to bone up on the subject, as a "hook" to grab attention.

Try as much as possible to deliver the talk in your own words, with the printed copy as a backstop or ready reference. The more you can adapt it to your workplace the better.

Add current, local statistics or make reference to happenings in the news. A talk about fire protection, for example, might be enlivened by a quote from your community's fire chief. That little extra

preparation provides a lot of extra impact.

It is a good idea to use props. "Show and tell" is the best way to convey a message — and most people remember what they see at least as vividly as what they only hear.

If you're talking about defective or hazardous hand tools, have samples to show. If the subject is the proper handling of steel drums, demonstrate how it should be done.

Better yet, have members of the group demonstrate, with directions from you. Visual aids like charts or pictures can also be helpful, provided they're large enough to be seen clearly.

Note: TalksZone safety meetings are not intended to take the place of your own safety procedures. Always consult and/or review your procedures before attempting any work.