Back safety toolbox talk: lifting and back injury prevention

29 CFR 1910.176, 1926.21, 1926.250

Date _____ Trainer _____ Location _____

Opening question

When did you last lift something and feel your back complain the next morning?

Why it matters

A back injury can follow you home. It can make it hard to work, drive, sleep and play with your kids. A back injury does not always come from one big lift. It can build up from small habits repeated all day, like twisting, reaching and lifting from the floor. OSHA has no specific standard for manual lifting or back injuries, so this talk is about good habits and about your employer's duty to train you on the hazards of your job.

Key points

1. **Plan the lift before you touch it**
   Look at the load and the path. Is the way clear? Is there a spot ready to set it down? Check for handles, slippery floors and doorways. If you cannot see a clear path from start to finish, fix that first. Where mechanical handling equipment is used, aisles and passageways must be kept clear, with nothing across them that could create a hazard (29 CFR 1910.176(a)).
   29 CFR 1910.176(a)

2. **Test the weight and get help**
   Push the load with your foot or hands before you lift. If it feels too heavy or too awkward, do not be a hero. Ask a coworker or use a cart, hand truck, dolly or hoist. Long, wide or shifting loads usually need two people.

3. **Lift with your legs, load close to your body**
   Stand close, feet apart, one foot slightly forward. Bend your knees, keep your back in its natural curve and grip firmly. Hold the load close to your belt. Lift smoothly with your legs. Jerking and fast moves put extra strain on your back.

4. **Do not twist**
   Turn your whole body by moving your feet. Do not twist at the waist while you hold a load. Lift, then step, then set down. Keep your nose and toes pointing the same way.

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5 Store things where they are safe to reach

Heavy items belong between your knees and your shoulders, not on the floor or on the top shelf. Storage must not create a hazard, and materials stored in tiers must be stacked, racked, blocked or interlocked so they cannot slide or fall (29 CFR 1910.176(b) and 29 CFR 1926.250(a)(1)). A stack that is easy to reach is also easy on your back.

29 CFR 1910.176(b)

6 Report pain early

Aches that do not go away are a warning. Tell your supervisor before a small problem becomes a big one. Stretch before work, take short breaks from repeat tasks and switch jobs when you can. No one gets in trouble for speaking up early.

Scenario

Picture this: A worker is unloading boxes from a pickup. The last box is at the back of the bed, so she bends over the tailgate and reaches. She grabs it with both hands, twists to set it on a cart and feels a sharp pull in her lower back. A coworker was ten steps away with a hand truck. What should she have done differently?

Crew discussion

1. What is the heaviest or most awkward thing we lift on this job?
2. Where do we have to twist, bend or reach to do our work?
3. What equipment could we use so nobody has to lift by hand?
4. How do you ask for help here, and does it feel easy or hard?

Bottom line **Plan the lift, get help or equipment, keep the load close and never twist while you carry.**

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Sign-in sheet / Hoja de asistencia

Topic / Tema Back injury prevention / Prevención de lesiones de espalda

Date / Fecha _____

Trainer / Instructor _____ Location / Lugar _____ Company / Empresa _____

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