

TOOLBOX TALK #8

KEEP SAFE LIFTING A PRIORITY

Lifting and carrying objects is common for many workers across the country. But training is important. If performed improperly, lifting and carrying items can lead to injuries. The National Safety Council (NSC) notes that manual handling of objects accounts for an estimated 25% of all occupational injuries. Common material handling injuries include strains and sprains (specifically to the back), cuts, fractures, and bruises.

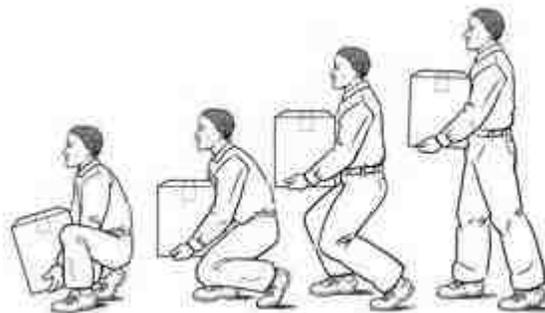
NSC states that no “sure-fire” rules exist for safe lifting: “Manual material handling is a very complex combination of moving body segments, changing joint angles, tightening muscles and loading the spinal column.” However, NSC does recommend following a number of do’s and don’ts pertaining to lifting.

DO

- Eliminate manual lifting whenever possible to help reduce injuries.
- Stay in good physical shape if lifting items is part of your job.
- Keep materials within easy reach and have handling aids around in case you need them.
- Make sure you have a good grip on any item you attempt to lift. Test the weight and balance of items before moving them. Too heavy? Get a mechanical lifting aid or ask a coworker for assistance.
- Keep the item you are lifting close to your body. Ensure your feet are close to the load, stand in a stable position with your feet pointed in the direction you’re moving, and lift mostly by straightening your legs.

DON’T

- Twist your back or bend in a sideways direction.
- Attempt to lift or lower an object if you’re in an awkward position.
- Feel compelled to lift an item that is too heavy – get help instead.
- Lift or lower an object if your arms are extended.
- Continue to lift an item if you realize it’s too heavy.
- Lift above your shoulders or below your knees.



Training for safe lifting can take time. NSC says that regular reinforcement of proper lifting techniques is critical as people tend to revert back to previous lifting habits. Safe work practices must be enforced and any unapproved deviation must be corrected immediately.