

TOOLBOX TALK #10

CARPET LAYERS: TAKE IT EASY ON THE KNEES

Carpet layers spend approximately 75% of their workday kneeling, according to the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) estimates, putting significant pressure on their knees. The use of a “knee kicker” tool to stretch carpets adds additional strain to the joint. Workers using this device generate force by striking the tool with one knee. The area just above the kneecap absorbs the impact.

Compared with workers who rarely kneel, NIOSH found that carpet layers have high frequencies of bursitis of the knee – fluid buildup requiring knee aspirations, skin infections of the knee and a variety of other knee disorders.

Follow these tips to protect knees when laying carpet:

- Wear knee pads when working on hard surfaces. They help distribute weight over a wider area and reduce the chance of penetrating wounds from kneeling on sharp objects.
- Building contractors, carpet dealers, instructors at carpet installation schools and trade union representatives should educate carpet layers on the hazards of using a knee kicker and encourage them to use a power stretcher to reduce strain.
- Employers should provide power stretchers so carpet layers do not have to depend on knee-kickers for wall-to-wall carpet installation. Employees should be properly trained on power stretcher use.
- Use of knee-kickers should be limited to engaging carpet edges onto the tack strips or installing carpet in areas where hard kicks are not required.

