

TOOLBOX TALK #11

REDUCE THE RISK OF BACK INJURIES

What's one-way workers can cut their risk of a back injury in half? Store it off the floor!



Safety pros and supervisors, you can help reduce the risk. When discussing safety with your crews, ask workers, “What are some ways that we can keep more objects at waist level in our workplace?” Listen to what they have to say and see which actions you can implement in the workplace.

Other information to share:

- Waist level is the best place to store heavy items and other things you use often at work.
- Lifting from the floor is twice as risky as lifting while you're standing upright.
- Lifting something from the floor level means you have to bend down to pick it up. That means you're also lifting the weight of your own upper body when you come back up. Good lifting technique does help, but a lot of stress is still placed on your back when you're lifting from the floor, even when you bend your knees.
- Lifting above your shoulders puts you at risk for neck and shoulder injuries.
- Heavy items shouldn't be stored overhead, because those items can fall and cause injury.

Here are some tips to help prevent back injuries:

- **Size it up.** Is the load light enough to be lifted by one person? If not, use a hand truck or ask a co-worker for assistance
- **Safely lift.** If the load can be lifted without help, bring it as close to your body as possible. Lift with your legs, not your back. Keep your head up and your back straight, and bend at the hips.
- **Move with care.** Keep the load close to your body as you walk. Shift – don't twist – your body to turn.
- **Don't just drop it.** When you're ready to set down the load, let your leg muscles “carry it down”. Make sure your fingers and toes are clear of the load before setting it down.