

PREVENTING OVEREXERTION

Approximately 25 percent of workplace injuries in Ohio result from overexertion, mainly from lifting, pulling or pushing objects. The part of the body most often injured is the back.

To minimize overexertion injuries in manual materials handling, lift in a manner you find natural and comfortable, while following basic guidelines.

NOTE TO DISCUSSION LEADER:

Ask the group to list what steps should be taken prior to lifting. Use the following as a guide:

Material Handling--Think Before You Lift

- Plan the job. Plan a route free from tripping and slipping hazards. Know ahead of time where the object is to be placed or, unloaded.
- Size up the load. How much does it weigh? Test the load to see whether or not you can lift it.
- Get help. If the load is too heavy or bulky to lift alone, ask someone else to help lift it.
- Find a better way. Arrange for mechanical help from a pushcart, handtruck, wheelbarrow or forklift.

Although you should lift naturally and comfortably, there are several rules to remember that keep lifting safe. What are they?

NOTE TO DISCUSSION LEADER:

List the basic rules, one at a time, on a blackboard or flipchart. Ask the group to discuss pros and cons of these rules:

- Keep it close. Get a good grip, and grasp the load firmly. Lift toward your belt buckle. Hold the load close to your body. The closer the load is to your spine, the less force it exerts on your back.
- Lift smoothly. Once you start the lift, continue to move smoothly; do not jerk the load. When you are ready to set the load down, lower it smoothly also.
- Avoid twisting. When you lift or set down your load, don't twist or bend excessively. If you must turn while lifting or carrying a

load, turn your feet and your whole body instead of twisting your back.

- Push rather than pull the load.

NOTE TO DISCUSSION LEADER:

Ask your employees to list jobs in their own work areas that could cause overexertion injuries. Could the chance for injury be eliminated by any of the following?

Discuss.

- Limiting the size and weight of items ordered; ordering items with handles.
- Using "sold to" or "ship to" arrangements to eliminate in-plant handling altogether.
- Using "just in time" or "order as needed" labels to reduce warehousing or stockpiling materials.
- Reducing the distance materials must be moved by improving the layout of the work area or relocating production or storage areas.
- Reducing bending motions by using lift tables or otherwise arranging materials at or near waist level.
- Reducing twisting motions by placing all materials and tools in front of the worker; where necessary, using conveyors, turntables and other devices to do that.
- Reducing stretching and reaching-out motions by placing materials and heavy objects as near the worker as possible.
- Increasing the load's weight by increasing the number of objects in a package so that it must be handled mechanically. Reducing the pushing and pulling of materials by using conveyors, slides, chutes, monorails, handtrucks, forklifts and similar aids.
- Using mechanical means whenever possible.

NOTE TO DISCUSSION LEADER:

Make notes of any suggestion from the previous list that could improve the odds against overexertion and pass them on to your supervisor or the economist at your workplace.

Remember, it is not usually the "one time" a peon lifts a box that causes back injuries --but the thousands of boxes lifted before.