7 MINUTE Safety Trainer

Safe Lifting Basics

GOALS

This safety session should teach employees to:

- Realize that lifting incorrectly can cause back injury.
- Know how to lift properly to protect the back.

Applicable Regulations: General Duty Clause 5(a)(1) of the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970

1. **Back strain and back injury cause serious pain and disability.**
   The back supports the body. One wrong move or repeated stress on weak back muscles can cause pain and injury.
   - Back injuries are one of the most common causes of work-related disability.
   - Back pain is the second-leading cause of lost work days, after the common cold.
   - Once back strain occurs, it often returns.
   - Back injury often requires extended bed rest and, in some cases, surgery.

2. **Personal habits can make back injury more likely.**
   You're more likely to have a back injury if you're in poor physical condition, overweight, under stress, have poor posture, or overexert yourself.
   - Regular exercise can strengthen back and stomach muscles.
   - Always consult your doctor before starting an exercise program.
   - Sit and stand straight; poor posture strains the back.
   - Be realistic about what you can carry and what you can do; overdoing can cause lasting damage.

3. **Lifting is a major cause of job-related back injury.**
   Lifting too much, or lifting improperly, puts too much strain on the back.

4. **Avoid lifting manually when possible.**
   Test the weight and stability of the object you want to move by lifting one corner slightly. If it's too heavy for safe manual lifting:
   - Use material-handling aids like dollies, hand trucks, or forklifts.
   - Get another person to help you lift.

5. **Plan and prepare before you lift.**
   - Stretch and bend gently to loosen muscles.
   - Choose the straightest, flattest, clearest route to your destination.
   - Remove anything from the route that could trip or block you.
   - Wear sturdy shoes with nonskid soles, gloves to provide grip, and clothing you won't trip over.

6. **Lift properly, so your legs do the work—not your back.**
   - Stand close to the load, with feet shoulder width apart and firmly on the floor.
   - Bend at the hips and knees and squat close to the load; keep your back straight.

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- Grip the load firmly with both hands, not just your fingers.
- Bring the load close to your body, keeping your weight centered over your feet.
- Stand slowly with your back straight and let your legs push you up.

7. Avoid back strain while carrying.

- Carry the load waist high.
- Be sure you have a good grip and can see where you're going.
- Walk slowly, taking small steps.
- Stop along the way to rest if you need it.
- Move your feet to turn direction. Don't twist! That's a major cause of injury.

8. Unload carefully.

- Lower the load slowly, with your knees bent.
- Place your hands so they don't get caught under the object while unloading.
- Place the load on the edge of the surface and slide it back.
- Stand slowly.

DISCUSSION POINTS:
Use light boxes to demonstrate (and have participants demonstrate) safe lifting techniques.

CONCLUSION:
- Proper lifting can prevent back injury.
- Minimize manual lifting. When you do lift, do it correctly so that your legs do the work—not your back.

TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE:
Have your employees take the Safe Lifting Basics quiz. By testing their knowledge, you can judge their ability to lift properly and whether they need to review this important topic again soon.