



POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

DEPARTMENT: Environmental Health and Safety

SUBJECT: Safe Lift Program

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Revised	01/09		12/2011					

POLICY:

SUNY New Paltz requires the procedures in this plan to be followed to provide a safe working environment. SUNY New Paltz has implemented these procedures on safe lifting practices to ensure that employees are trained to protect themselves from the hazards of improper lifting practices.

SCOPE:

All SUNY New Paltz employees have job duties that require some lifting or materials handling are to review this program.

RESPONSIBILITIES:

EH&S

Develop and periodically review safety programs for effectiveness. Advise supervisors on back safety and safe lifting techniques.

Supervisors

It is the responsibility of supervisor/management to ensure that these policies are implemented. It is the responsibility of supervisors/management to ensure that these policies and the information necessary to carry out this policy are communicated to employees.

Employees

It is the responsibility of all employees to follow safe work practices and comply with these rules regarding work practices. The effectiveness of the back safety plan depends upon the active support and involvement of all affected employees.

Safe Lifting Techniques

The following points outline good lifting practices and procedures, safe lifting techniques that may be taught to associates to minimize their risk of back injury and pain. Lifting remains an important function despite the level of mechanization found in the workplace today, so attention must be directed toward safe lifting practices.

The basics of good lifting are:

1. Size up the load before you lift. Test by lifting one of the corners or pushing. If it is heavy or feels too clumsy, get a mechanical aid or help from another worker. When in doubt, do not lift alone! GET HELP.

2. **BEND THE KNEES.** You will note this is capitalized. There is a reason for that -- it is the single most important aspect of lifting.

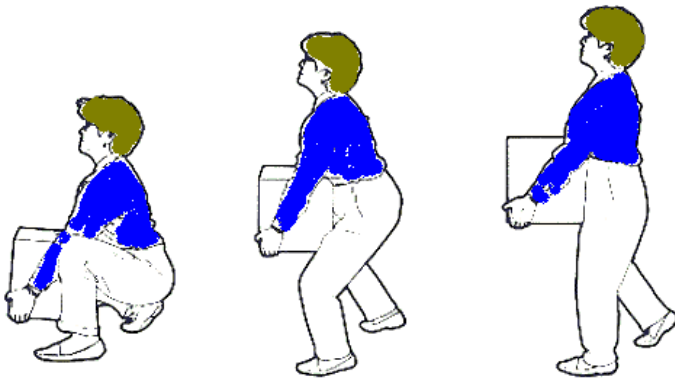
3. When performing the lift:

Get as close to the object as possible

Place your feet close to the object and center yourself over the load.

Get a good hand hold.

Lift straight up, smoothly and let your legs do the work, not your back.

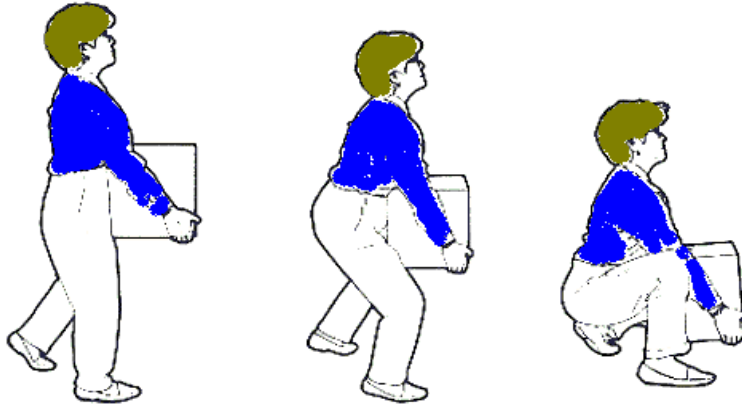


Avoid overreaching or stretching to pick up or set down a load.

Do not twist or turn your body once you have made the lift.

4. Make sure you have a clear path to carry the load.

5. Set the load down properly. **BEND KNEES AND NOT YOUR BACK**



Other Safe Lift information

Pushing vs. Pulling Objects - Always push, not pull, the object when possible.

Change the lifting situation if possible to minimize a lifting hazard:

If it is a long load, get help. Split the load into several smaller ones, when you can, to achieve manageable lifting weight.

Avoiding lifts from below the knees or above the shoulders by using mechanical aids, positioning yourself so that the object to move is within an acceptable lifting range (between the shoulders and knees), and/or getting help from your co-workers.

Alternative Materials-Handling Techniques

Alternative materials-handling techniques for carrying or moving loads are to be used whenever possible to minimize lifting and bending requirements. These alternative materials-handling techniques include use of:

- * Hoists,
- * Forklifts,
- * Dollies,
- * Carts, and
- * Other mechanical devices.

Other Safe Work Techniques

Work issues other than lifting are related to back pain or injury. You can avoid them or improve work techniques related to them.

Catching Objects & Working Low -When catching falling or tossed objects, your feet should be firmly planted, with your back straight and your knees slightly bent. Your legs should absorb the impact, not your back. If you're working on something low, bend your knees. Keep your back as straight as possible. Bending from the waist can lead to back pain. If you have to use your back, keep your knees bent and your back flat. In both of these situations, frequent rest breaks are necessary to keep from getting back fatigue.

Extended Sitting/Standing - Certain jobs require long hours of standing or sitting. These conditions can create back troubles. Get up and stretch frequently if you are required to sit for long periods. If standing, ease the strain on your lower back by changing foot positions often, placing one foot on a rail or ledge. However, keep your weight evenly balanced when standing. Don't lean to one side.

Other Materials Handling Tasks - Tasks such as lowering, pushing, pulling, and carrying can create hazards to the back as well. If the task feels uncomfortable or unnatural, utilize the alternative materials-handling techniques listed in this Back Safety Plan.

Housekeeping - Poor housekeeping: slippery floors, crowded work conditions, tools or other hazards on the floor can create slip, trip or fall hazards that can result in back injury.

Poor Posture at Work - Be aware of proper posture when sitting, standing, or reclining. When sitting, your knees should be slightly higher than your hips and your shoulders and upper back should be straight. When lying down or sleeping, keep your knees slightly bent. Sleeping on your stomach can lead to morning backache.

Other Back Safety Issues

Factors unrelated to work that can affect back safety, including such things as physical condition and posture, athletic or home-improvement activity, and tension and stress.

Posture - Whether you're standing, sitting, or reclining, posture affects the amount of strain put on your back. The wrong posture increases strain on the back muscles and may bend the spine into positions that will cause trouble. When standing correctly, the spine has a natural "S" curve. The shoulders are back and the "S" curve is directly over the pelvis. Good sitting posture should put your knees slightly higher than your hips. Your hips should be to the rear of the chair with your lower back not overly arched. Also, your shoulders and upper back are not rounded. Reclining posture is important, too. Sleep on your side with knees bent or sleep on your back. Sleeping on your stomach, especially on a sagging mattress with your head on a thick pillow, puts too much strain on the spine. Result: morning backache.

Poor Physical Condition - Your physical condition can lead to back pain. If you are overweight, and especially if you have developed a pot belly, extra strain on your spine results. An estimate is that every extra pound up front puts 10 pounds of strain on your back. When you are out of shape, the chances for chronic back pain are greater. Infrequent exercise is a major factor, too. A sudden strain on generally unused back muscle leads to trouble, particularly when there is a sudden twisting or turning of the back. Proper diet and exercise is the sensible way to help avoid back problems.

Stress - Stress is another factor that may lead to back pain. Tied in with your general physical condition, stress created from work or play can cause muscle spasms that affect the spinal nerve network. Although stress is part of everyone's life, and a certain amount of stress is normal, excessive stress causes backache. The solution is a balanced life style with time to relax.

Repetitive Trauma - People often think back injuries result from lifting heavy or awkward objects. Many back injuries, however, do not come from a single lift, but occur from relatively minor strains over time. Back injuries, as with other cumulative trauma disorders (CTD), may arise from repeated injuries. (But, repetitive, low-grade strains usually do not cause CTDs.) As the worker repeats a particular irritating movement, the minor injuries begin to accumulate and weaken affected muscles or ligaments. Eventually a more serious injury may occur. Thus, a specific weight lifted may actually have little to do with any single injury. Remember to use mechanical aids when appropriate along with good lifting techniques, whenever you do any lifting. You can lift safely when performed with caution.

Summary

Back Safety Awareness is necessary, due to the prevalence and severity of back injuries throughout business and industry. Sprains and strains are the most common causes of lower back pain. Backs can be injured by improper lifting, falling, auto accidents, and sports activities. But of these, lifting improperly is the largest single cause of back pain and injury. Instituting proper lifting techniques and other safety measures can significantly reduce your chance of a back injury incident.