

My Workers' Comp Info

MANUAL MATERIAL HANDLING SAFETY TIPS FOR LIFTING AND CARRYING



Safety experts say that many workers don't give enough thought to the proper way to lift or carry items. Improper handling of materials, particularly carrying and lifting activities, can contribute to certain cumulative injuries, such as low back strain, low back disk injury, shoulder strain, and neck strain. "Risk factors" such as improper posture (bending at waist, twisting, raised elbows, prolonged kneeling or stooping), too much load weight, and distance can contribute to these cumulative injuries.

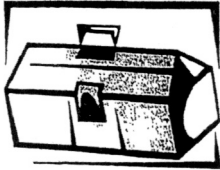
The good news is that safety professionals say that exercising good safety practices can help reduce the likelihood of injury when lifting and carrying. A few tips to keep in mind include:

- Size up the load. Take a few seconds to think about how heavy the item is, how you are going to handle the load, where you are going to move it, is it within your physical capability to safely handle it, and do you have enough room to lift it?
- Ensure that the path is clear, with ample room to maneuver and good footing. Make sure the floor and pathway have clearance (no cords, wires, boxes) and are not slippery so you can maneuver appropriately and with good footing. Wear appropriate footwear that will provide you with extra slip resistance.
- Use your knees, not your back and lift comfortably and smoothly. Do not bend at the waist. Squat or use one knee on the ground. As you lift, keep your back straight and use your leg muscles to lift the load. Do not jerk the load from a resting position into a carrying position.
- Ideally, keep all loads between knuckle and shoulder height. It is best to try to keep the lifting and carrying activities in a posture where the load is between your shoulders and the height of your knuckles when arms are at your side.
- Avoid twisting and bending while lifting or moving. Bending and twisting can significantly increase the loading on the back. If you have to move in a different direction, do so by first moving your feet and rotating your whole body in the new direction of travel.
- Keep objects close to the body. The further a load is carried away from the body, the greater the stress placed on the low back. Keep objects close to your body.
- Avoid heavy lifts, get help. If the load looks like more than you can handle, get help either from another person or by using a mechanical lifting/moving aid. If the load can be divided into smaller units that can be safely handled, do so.
- Never allow the load to obstruct your view. Make sure the size of the load does not block your view. If you can't see where you are going, you might have a trip and fall exposure.
- If handles are provided on the load, use them. Handles allow you to grasp the load with a power grip and help provide additional stability when lifting or moving the load.

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CHOOSING & USING HAND TOOLS FOR COMFORT & SAFETY



Improper use of hand tools can contribute to discomfort, fatigue and injury to the fingers, wrists, elbows, and upper extremities, including shoulders. Safety professionals suggest the use of good practices to help avoid or reduce discomfort and injury to your muscles and tissues when you use hand tools.

Some of these include:

When using a Hand Tool (Your behavior):

- Keep your wrist, elbow and shoulder in as neutral a position as possible. Bend the tool, not the wrist.
- Minimize your muscular effort when you use a tool. Try not to use force, to avoid straining or fatiguing your body.
- Avoid heavy pressure on the center of the palm.
- Avoid extending your arms away from the body when supporting a heavy hand tool.
- If you use a power tool, make sure the power tool is a minimum weight for the job. Some brands of power tools are half the weight of others with identical power output and reliability.
- In highly repetitive tool usage, keep the weight of the tool low.
- Use a tool support if you use tools heavier than a pound or two.
- Keep the tool in proper balance when using. Line the tool's center of gravity with the center of your grasping hand to help avoid your hand from being whipped around by the rotational movements or torque of the tool.
- If you use gloves, use gloves that fit properly.
- Inspect and replace rubber boots on impact tools.

When purchasing your own tools, you have an additional opportunity to choose hand tools for comfort. Some of these include:

When Choosing a Hand Tool (Equipment):

- Use tools with handles whenever possible. Choose a handle that is the right size for your hand and comfortable to hold. Avoid form-fitting handles if you do not have an average-sized hand. Form fitting tools generally are designed for an "average" size and aren't comfortable for everyone.
- Use handles that are well-rounded, to help distribute the force you use, if you grasp tightly.
- If you wear gloves when using the tool, add a 1/2". Handles that are too short (less than 4") generally do not allow all of the fingers to grip and the handle may dig into the palm causing reduction in blood flow.
- Textured rubber handles will usually provide enough friction for a good grip. A T-shaped handle provides greater torque with less grip force.
- Use well-balanced tools with support handles that allow you to support the tool with both hands.
- Avoid tools that dig in to the palm of your hand or sides of fingers.
- Tool handles should be nonporous, slip-resistant, and nonconductive.
- A full-hand power grip is less fatiguing than a pinch grip. Pick a power grip in which your hand can wrap around the handle.
- Use tools with "strip triggers" or triggers that operate using 2 or more fingers.
- Use spring loaded pliers and scissors, when possible.
- Use vibration-absorbing pads on handles.

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