



Toolbox Talks for Club Employees: Preventing Strains and Sprains

Manual material handling is common to many industries, especially the club industry. Routine tasks include receiving and stocking cases of food in the kitchen and alcohol to the club's multiple food outlets as well as distributing supplies such as club stationary throughout the administrative offices. Whatever your task, planning is essential to control exposures to sprains and strains. With this in mind, anyone who spends a good part of their work day moving materials should learn to work smarter, rather than harder! Utilize these tips to make your task safe.

The First Steps to Materials Handling

1. Identify a task involving material handling (lifting, pushing, carrying, setting down, etc.).
2. Break the task down into its most basic steps. What does the worker do? (Example: lift a case of material from a truck bed, turn and carry it to a location in the building where it is set on the ground).
3. Know your lifting limits and do not to exceed them. It is always better to ask for assistance with a task than to suffer the consequences.
4. Apply the lifting principles listed below, as applicable.

Pre-Lift Assessment

1. What is the weight of the load to be lifted or carried?
2. Can you lift it alone? Is assistance from a co-worker or mechanical assistance needed?
3. Does the size/shape of the load present any problem? Bulky or odd shaped products can be difficult to lift. If the object is wider than your shoulders, you may not be able to get a good grip on it. Can you see clearly around or over the object when you pick it up?
4. Will you have to turn/change direction while carrying the load?
5. Is the route you will take clear of obstructions, slip, trip or fall hazards?

Lifting/Lowering

1. Get as close as possible to the load and keep the load close to the body during the entire lift and lower.
2. Try to keep your back straight at all times to keep the spine and muscles in proper alignment. Bend your knees, not your back.
3. Keep the load directly in front of you at all times. Do not twist while lifting or lowering a load. Keep you toes pointed in the same direction as the load.
4. Use cutouts or attached handles so the object can be gripped with the whole hand.
5. Get a good grip on the object and test its weight. If it seems too heavy or bulky ask for help.
6. Lift the load in a slow, smooth fashion, avoiding quick and jerky motions.
7. Keep your arms and elbows close to your torso when lifting.
8. Keep your feet about shoulder width apart for greater stability and lifting power.
9. Be aware of your balance and what part of your body is doing the work. It should be your legs.

Overhead Lifting Cautions

1. Minimize lifting of loads that are over your head. Use a step stool or ladder to climb up so your shoulders are level with the load. Make certain you are standing on a stable surface before you attempt the lift.
2. Pull the load close to your body before attempting to lift it, grip it firmly, and carry it at about waist height. Carefully step down from the step stool or ladder while maintaining good posture.
3. Consider using a spotter to help you maintain your balance.

Setting Loads Down

1. Use the same process in lowering a load that you used in lifting a load.
2. Set down a corner or edge of the object first. Be careful to keep your fingers out from under the load.

Tips When Carrying

1. Reduce carrying by using a cart or mechanical device when ever possible
2. Look ahead to make certain the way is clear.
3. Make sure you can see forward over your load. Trying to save time by carrying that one extra box is not worth getting injured.
4. Set the load down if it becomes too heavy or unstable.
5. Have someone open doors, gates, etc. for you.
6. Keep shoulders, hips and feet pointing the same direction.

Moving Carts and Hanging Loads

1. Remember to push, not pull whenever possible.
2. Push loads with the hands at about mid-chest height
3. Be cautious about hand placement since fingers can get caught between transport devices and doors, walls, or other hard objects.
4. Watch for pinch or shear points on carts, dollies or hoists.

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