September 2022

- BACK INJURY PREVENTION TIPS
- HARD HATS
- SAFETY AND YOUR SUPERVISOR

BACK INJURY PREVENTION TIPS

BACK INJURY PREVENTION TIPS

Most of you have probably heard that to lift safely, you must lift properly. You're told to "bend your knees not your back," and "don't twist as you lift." This is good advice but sometimes seems to go against human nature. Yet, there *are* actions you can take to help you lift properly and avoid back injury.

1. **Get as close to the load as possible.** The further the load is from the center line of your body, the greater the strain imposed on your back. If need be, squat down to lift the load and pull it between your legs. This gets it closer to the center of your body and helps prevent the need to bend at the waist. However, since your leg muscles are the largest muscles in your body, they are the biggest energy consumers. Repeated squatting can be very fatiguing and reduces a person's ability to lift in this manner for any length of time. In addition to lifting the load, you are also hoisting most of your body weight. For *repeated* lifting, other strategies must be used.

2. **Avoid picking up heavy objects placed below your knees.** Try to see that heavy objects are placed and stored above knee level and below shoulder level. If you suspect the load is too heavy to be lifted comfortably, do not chance it. Use a mechanical aid, break the load down into its component parts, or get help. The most common cause of back injury is overloading.

3. **Keep your back straight.** This means don't bend at the waist when reaching to lift an object. Keep the natural arch in your lower back, which distributes the load evenly over the surface of spinal disks and is less stressful than if the disk is pinched between vertebras. Bending principally from the hips is acceptable if you maintain the arch in your back, rather than bending at the waist.

4. **Glue your hand to your thigh.** If you carry a load in one hand, such as when carrying a toolbox, place your free hand on the outside of your thigh and mentally "glue" it into position. This will help you maintain correct back alignment rather than lifting and tilting to one side. When carrying a heavy load, side bending can be just as stressful to the spine as bending forward.

5. **Tighten your stomach muscles.** This technique helps prevent your spine from twisting. If you lift a load and need to place it off to one side, turn by moving your feet. After repeated lifts you might find yourself getting a bit sloppy and forgetting to move your feet. You can overcome this tendency if the place you set the load down is at least one step away from where it is lifted. If you wear a back support belt, wear it low on your trunk and loosen it when you are not lifting.

6. **Stretch and loosen up before work.** Research has shown that trunk flexibility and mobility is significantly lower in the morning than later in the day, increasing the number and severity of back strains at this time. A few minutes of stretching can warm up cold stiff muscles and tendons and help you avoid an injury.

HARD HATS

HARD HATS

A hard hat is meant to protect your head from the impact of falling material and accidental bumping.

The hat's suspension components act as a shock absorber and are designed to absorb or deflect a blow and distribute the impact over a large area. Even if the hat dents or shatters, it can still take some force out of the blow and off your head. It can also shield your scalp, face, neck, and shoulders against hazardous spills or splashes. Only wear approved hard hats manufactured to meet required industry standards. For maximum protection, choose the hard hat most suitable for the work being performed. Make sure your hat fits correctly. A hat that fits correctly will be the most comfortable and provide the best protection.

For maximum protection and comfort, the sweat bands and suspension straps must be properly adjusted because the ability of a hard hat to protect the head depends on the shock absorbing space between the shell and head by the suspension provided. Sunlight and heat can rot the sweatband and straps, so don't leave your hard hat on the window ledge of your car. Take good care of your hard hat. Don't drop it, throw it, or drill holes in it. Inspect your hard hat every day for cracks, gouges, and frays or breaks in the straps. Observe and comply with "Hard Hat Area" sites. Remember – a hard hat is a status symbol; it identifies a safe worker, one who believes in and practices safety.

** Hard Hats must be always worn by SCS employees on site unless inside a building that is fully drywalled. **

SAFETY AND YOUR SUPERVISOR

Safety and Your Supervisor

Safety does not just happen. Remember the old saying, if something can go wrong, it will. We must work to make things happen right; that is, in a safe manner. But one person cannot do this alone - It takes the cooperation of everyone.

Your company has a moral, legal, and financial interest in your well-being. Supervisors should be receptive to your safety concerns. Have you ever brought a problem to your supervisor only to have it dismissed? It happens. This does not mean he or she isn't interested, and you should drop the subject. You can't afford to. You may be the one getting hurt. Let us look at ways you can use to make your supervisor share your safety concerns.

- Don't wait until the problem becomes critical. As soon as you see the adjustment slipping, guard loosening, or scheduling problems, speak up. This will give your supervisor the opportunity to deal with the problem in a planned manner. Planning is part of a supervisor's job. Help him do it right.

- Don't be overly emotional or accusatory. Maybe you were just involved in a "near miss." Emotion is understandable. But it is a rare supervisor who will deliberately put someone in harm's way. More likely than not, the supervisor was not aware of the problem.

- Be prepared to offer your assessment as to whether the problem is critical or not. Don't overstate the seriousness, but don't understate it either. If you don't know whether the problem is critical or not, say so.

- Offer suggestions as to what needs to be done to correct the problem. This may clarify, in your supervisor's mind, what needs to be done and helps facilitate understanding. Again, if you don't know, say so.

- Finally, try to get commitment as to when the problem will be corrected. The idea is not to put anyone on the spot. But, when there is a firm commitment, people tend to pay more attention. If you don't see any action by the completion date, follow-up or remind the supervisor of your concern.

Again, supervisors are human. They can get buried in things that may need more immediate attention and/or they could just forget.

Supervisors - remember the employee who brings safety problems to your attention is just trying to do his job and help you with yours. Their concerns should never be dismissed without a review.