

Safe Lifting and Carrying

AgSafe Safe Work Procedure

It is important to take extra care when lifting and moving heavy objects. Chronic back ailments are common in the industry, and most of these problems can be traced directly to poor lifting techniques

Severe back injuries can be crippling for life. Individuals may get away with practicing poor lifting methods for several years, but back problems are virtually certain to be the long-term result.

A great amount of pressure is placed on the lumbar spine when a person bends their back instead of their knees while lifting. The mechanically poor "bent back" position can produce a force of as much as 700 kg on the spinal disc while a person is lifting only 50kg! Such pressure often ruptures a disc. An injury of this nature can be permanent and could force a worker into early retirement.

USE OF PROPER PROCEDURES AND BODY POSITIONING WHEN LIFTING WILL REDUCE THE RISK OF INJURY.

The following steps should be taken to minimize the potential for back damage:

1. Protect your hands and feet. Gloves provide a physical barrier to snags from wires, wood splinters, or sharp edges. Steel-toed safety footwear will prevent injury when objects are dropped or set down improperly.
2. Get good footing. Check the route of travel before attempting to move an object, and remove obstacles and debris that could cause a fall. Position the feet slightly apart for balance, with one foot ahead of the other.
3. **BEND YOUR KNEES!** Get close to the object that is to be lifted. Keep your back straight and your chin pulled in -- the idea is to have your head, neck and back make as straight a line as possible.
4. Get a good grip, whenever possible, grasp the object with a full hand grip instead of with the fingertips -- it's less likely to slip and fall. Tilt boxes and get one hand under them. Place the other hand diagonally opposite. The principle of gripping diagonally also applies when lifting sacks of grain and fertilizer.
5. Lift with your leg muscles. Lift smoothly, not with a jerk. Keep your back straight and the load close to your body. When your knees are straight, bring your back leg forward to support the weight. Walk carefully.
6. Use mechanical aids (hooks, straps or pulleys) to lift a heavy load from the floor. These devices should also be used to lift light objects that obstruct vision.
7. If an object is too heavy get help prior to attempting to lift or carry the object. Don't be a hero.

Please use the following **Safe Work Procedures** as a guideline to building your own safe work procedures.