

THE SAFETY OBSERVER

Safety Information for Employees

MANUAL MATERIAL HANDLING (MMH)

Manual Material Handling (MMH) is the process of manually moving, lifting, pushing, pulling, carrying, or transporting objects or materials. Because MMH is common on every property and the injuries can be so severe, claims resulting from MMH make up the most expensive types of employee injuries. Back injuries are typically the result of not moving materials properly. Therefore, proper lifting technique is essential in preventing injuries and other strains.

Preparing To Lift

- Check the item that is going to be lifted for loose contents that could shift or fall out while carrying. (Electrical cords should be wound and secured.)
- Make sure that there are no obstacles or slippery surfaces in the path that you'll be taking.
- Be aware of nails or other protrusions that could cause other types of injury.
- **Do not hesitate to get help with heavy or awkward loads.**
- Know your lifting abilities. Remember to not overexert yourself. Make sure you are doing lifting that is appropriate to your age and physical condition.

Lifting

- Always face the load you are lifting.
- Lift with your feet shoulder width apart, your knees bent, and pelvis tucked close to the object being lifted.
- Get a good, comfortable grip on the load before you attempt to lift it.
- With the load close to your body and your back straight, lift gradually with your legs, not your back.
- Never twist or lean! Let your legs turn your body's direction.

Setting the Load Down

- Keep your feet shoulder width apart.
- Keep your pelvis tucked and your body close to the load.
- Do the reverse steps and lower with your legs. (Watch those fingers!)

Some other tips to help prevent MMH injuries include:

- Your shoes do affect the amount of strain and tension that is put on your back, whether lifting or not. Make sure your shoes support your feet properly.
- Utilize mechanical assistance whenever possible, such as a hand truck or tow dolly.
- Remember, back belts only work in conjunction with proper lifting techniques.
- When lifting as a team, one person is to give direction. Communicate and take your time.
- Try to periodically rest the muscles that are constantly in use, and drink lots of water. Dehydration can lead to exhaustion. Exhaustion can lead to overexertion.