

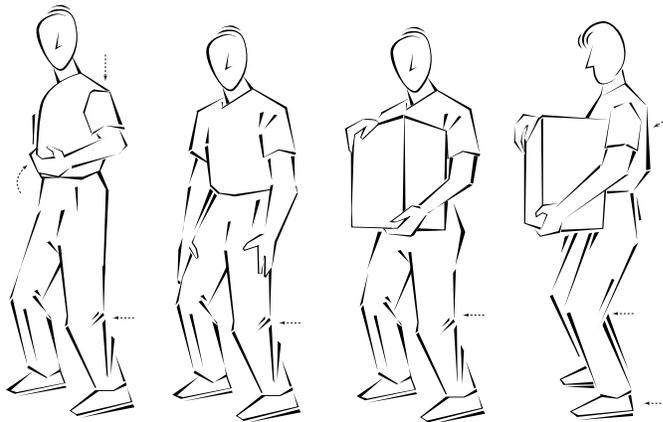
Lifting Basics

The construction industry has the second highest rate of back injuries. Twenty-five percent of injuries in construction are back injuries. Not only is a back injury painful, but it can be permanent and it can end your career. Know and use the following guidelines for correct lifting and avoid unnecessary injury.

BEFORE YOU LIFT

Size up the load and ask yourself:

- Is this object too heavy or too awkward for me to lift and carry alone?
- How high do I have to lift it?
- How far do I have to carry it?
- Is this lifting a regular part of my job?
- Am I trying to impress someone by not using a mechanical lifting device?
- Is the path clear?



WHEN LIFTING

- ✓ Position your feet correctly: one foot next to the load and one foot behind it.
- ✓ Center yourself over the load, squat at the knees with your back straight and your head forward.
- ✓ Grip and hug the load using your full palms and keeping your elbows and arms near you.
- ✓ Lift straight up, thrusting down with your legs.
- ✓ Never twist your body. If you must turn, point your feet in the direction you need to turn.
- ✓ Set the load down by slowly bending your knees, letting your legs do most of the work. Don't let go of the load until it's on the ground.

KNOW YOUR OWN STRENGTH

- Most women should lift no more than 28 pounds. Only 10 percent can lift as much as 47 pounds.
- Most men should lift no more than 37 pounds. Only 10 percent can lift 70 pounds safely.

IF YOU GET HURT

- Report any injury to your supervisor immediately so he or she can help you set up a work plan and you can protect your workers' compensation rights.
- Give your injury time to heal.
- If pain persists, see your doctor.
- Get into a physical conditioning program that includes stretching and strength exercises.

How Much Do You Know About Back Safety?

Back injuries are a frequent cause of lost work and income, not to mention severe pain. Knowledge is your most powerful back safety tool. Take these quizzes to test your knowledge of back safety.

1. TRUE OR FALSE: If an object weighs more than 50 pounds, you should not lift or carry it by yourself.

5. Name four of the most common lifting injuries:

2. Name five common causes of back injury:

6. What are the five rules of safe lifting?

3. TRUE OR FALSE: When you lift properly, you use the strength of your back, not your arms.

4. TRUE OR FALSE: You should do warm-up exercises before work to help prevent muscular injury.

ANSWERS: 1. **True.** Most people should not lift anything weighing more than 40 pounds by themselves. 2. lifting with straight legs; bending at the waist; tripping while carrying an object; trying to lift something too quickly; leaning or stretching to pick up an object; lifting when tired; lifting awkwardly-shaped objects; lifting something that's too heavy. 3. **False.** When you lift, you should use the strength of your legs, not your back. 4. **True.** 5. back strains and sprains, slipped discs, muscle spasms, hernias 6. Tuck your pelvis; bend your knees; hug the load close; avoid twisting; if it's too heavy, don't lift it.

HOW OFTEN DO YOU DO THE FOLLOWING?

	ALWAYS	SOMETIMES	SELDOM
back exercises to keep in shape			
ask for help when a load is too heavy			
practice good posture			
stretch before lifting			
use mechanical aids, such as dollies and forklifts			
get regular exercise			
avoid overdoing it			

Give yourself two points for each "Always," and one point for each "Sometimes" answer. A score of 12 to 14 means your doing everything right. A score of 8 to 11 means you're aware of back safety, but you could be doing better. A score below 8 means you better start taking better care of your back.

MARK EACH OF THE FOLLOWING AS "SAFE" OR "AT RISK."

	SAFE	AT RISK
1. bending at the waist to pick up a heavy object		
2. bending your knees instead of your back		
3. holding the load close to you		
4. lifting straight up		
5. lifting with your hands only		
6. tucking your pelvis in as you lift		
7. turning the upper half of your body		
8. twisting as you lift or put down an object		

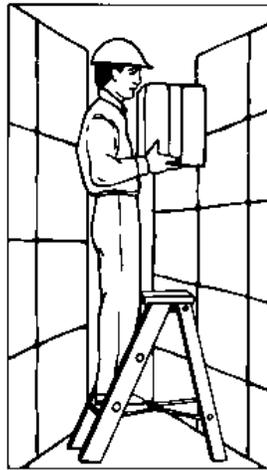
Answers: Safe: 2, 3, 4, 6; At Risk: 1, 5, 7, 8

Tips for Lifting and Moving Awkward Loads

The safest way to lift an object is to tuck your pelvis, bend your knees, hug the load close to you and lift straight up without twisting, while maintaining the natural curves of your back. But what if the object is overhead, below you in a bin or just too awkward for standard lifting techniques? Here are some suggestions for handling awkwardly shaped or awkwardly located loads.

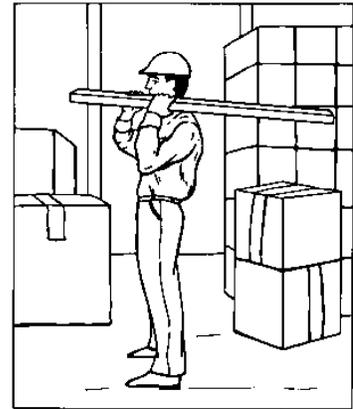
OVERHEAD LOADS

- Use a ladder, stool or platform to avoid overreaching.
- Test the weight, then slide the object toward you and hug it close as you descend.
- If possible, lower the object to a coworker before descending.



LONG, LIGHT LOADS

- Carry them on your shoulder, with the front end higher than the rear.



REACHING INTO A BIN

- Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart.
- Bend your knees slightly.
- Squat as far down as comfortable, using your hips and knees, not your waist.
- Slide the load as close to you as possible.
- Tighten your abdominal muscles.
- Brace your knees against the sides of the container for support.
- Raise yourself, using your leg and hip muscles, not your back.

CAN'T SEE WHERE YOU'RE GOING?

- Get mechanical help or ask a coworker to help you, even if the load is light.

LONG, HEAVY LOADS

- Get a coworker to help you. Walk in step, carrying the load on your shoulders.

What awkward lifting tasks do you encounter in your work area? How do you handle them?

Are there ways to store or package your awkward materials to make them safer?
