

TOOLBOX TALK

Using mechanical aids to prevent ergonomic injuries

According to Liberty Mutual Insurance's Workplace Safety Index, injuries related to pushing, pulling, holding, carrying, or throwing material cost employers \$13.7 billion. Consider these additional back-related injury statistics from Liberty Mutual:

- ◆ 1 million workers suffer back injuries each year
- ◆ 1 out of 5 workplace injuries are back related
- ◆ 4 out of 5 back injuries are to the lower back
- ◆ 3 of those 4 injuries occur when lifting

Several factors increase the risk of a severe injury from lifting or handling materials. These factors are related to the differences in the load, the organization of the work, the work environment, and the worker. The load may be too heavy or too large. We may work on unstable or uneven surfaces.

The human factor also plays a role in ergonomic injuries. These factors include the lack of experience, training, familiarity with the job, and age. The risk of low-back disorders increases with age and with the number of years at work, our physical dimensions, and capacity (such as height, weight, strength, and prior history of musculoskeletal disorders – back disorders in particular).

Conducting a risk assessment will identify hazards and individuals at risk and provide guidance on correcting those hazards. Consider the work being done, identify what may cause or increase the risk of ergonomic injuries, and whether a mechanical aid may be used to handle, carry, or stack materials.

MECHANICAL AIDS



Good



Better



Best