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*Safety Tips: Prevent
Back Injuries*

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics:

- ✓ Over 1 million workers suffer back injuries each year.
- ✓ Back injuries account for 1 out of 5 workplace injuries or illnesses.
- ✓ 1/4th of all compensation indemnity claims involve back injuries, costing employers millions of dollars each year.

These statistics do not reflect the pain and suffering that one experiences with a back injury. They are difficult to heal and have a negative effect on those that have the pain. According to some sources, once you experience a back injury and recuperate from it, you probably will experience another one sometime in your life.

With these facts in mind, it behooves us to learn the techniques and procedures that might just help us abort a recurrence. Secondly, if you have never experienced a back injury, these techniques can enable you to have more protection to avoid the first occurrence.

Everyone whose job requires stressful lifting or awkward postures is at risk for a back injury. Following are some tips to help preserve your back and reduce the risk of a costly and painful experience:

WHILE LIFTING-

- ✓ Don't bend over an object that you are lifting. Bend your knees, squatting in front of the object to reach it.
- ✓ Lift the object slowly and carefully, using your leg and arm muscles to lift, not pulling with your back.
- ✓ Keep your head up and look straight ahead while making the lift.
- ✓ While lifting, keep the object as close to your body as possible.

***DON'T LEARN SAFETY
BY ACCIDENT!***

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CHANCE TAKERS ARE ACCIDENT MAKERS!!

- ✓ Keep abdominal muscles tight when making a lift.
- ✓ Use the same techniques when you put the object down.
- ✓ If the object is too big or too large to lift using these techniques, call for help or get mechanical assistance.
- ✓ Use the palms of your hands, not just your fingers, to have a secure grip on your load. Make sure that once you have the load that you'll be able to maintain it without switching your grip.

WHEN REACHING FOR OBJECTS-

- ✓ Do not reach for an object unless you feel or know that you can handle the load.
- ✓ Use a stepladder to reach objects above shoulder height.
- ✓ Avoid awkward stretches while reaching. These stress your back and could cause you to lose your balance.
- ✓ Don't depend on structures to support you, such as shelving or storage racks. Obviously, these could easily give away by you pulling or tugging on them.
- ✓ Once you're standing, change directions by pointing your feet in the direction you want to go and turning your whole body. Avoid twisting at your waist while carrying a load.

USING BACK BELTS-

We read and witness where some companies require or at least furnish back belts for their employees in areas where lifting is common. According to the National Safety Council (NSC), available scientific data does not completely support nor condemn the use of back belts to control low back injuries.

One common agreement is that the belts should never be used as a substitute for a comprehensive back injury prevention program. Many companies have developed a back belt policy. It states that if you use one, it has a tendency to give a false sense of security. You may attempt to pick up more than you can handle.