

Lifting and Handling Operations

The purpose of this section is to provide guidelines as to the proper techniques for moving materials either in hurried emergency situations or in more controlled situations. While it is understood that in an emergency situation there are certain materials that must be moved quickly, there are certain techniques and procedures that can always be followed which can significantly reduce your chances of an injury while lifting, pulling, or pushing.

Because the majority of back injuries that occur during lifting experiences can be avoided, it is a good rule of thumb to approach all lifts more safely by following these five simple *Rules of Lifting*:

- A. Assess the object you are about to lift. Check for shifting weights and objects and have a clear understanding of how you intend to lift the object. If the object is heavy, get someone to help you lift. Think before you lift!
- B. Bend at your knees, not your waist. Bend down with your knees, and straddle the load you are about to lift. Avoid bending at the waist, and keep your back straight.
- C. Tuck your pelvis under, and firm-up your stomach muscles just before you lift. Tightening the stomach muscles helps support your back.
- D. Hug the object you are lifting close to your body. Unnecessary and potentially dangerous amounts of stress and strain are placed on your back when objects are held away from your body.
- E. Lift with your leg muscles. Once you have a firm grip on the object, rise in a smooth steady motion, and let the leg muscles do most of the work.



The following tips, used in conjunction with the above rules, will enhance your basic lifting technique and help you avoid potential back injuries.

- F. Never twist your body while lifting. Keep your body facing the load and move your feet to adjust your position.
- G. Make sure your walkway is clear. Review your walking path, and remove unnecessary objects; they are accidents-waiting-to-happen.
- H. Know where you will put the load down. Looking for a place to put a heavy object down when it's already in your arms is asking for trouble.
- I. Use the appropriate footwear when lifting. Your footwear should help you maintain your balance and footing.
- J. Use mechanical help or the assistance of a co-worker when necessary. There is no point in straining your back. Get help!
- K. Get a firm grip on the item to be lifted.
- L. Lift gradually. Don't jerk upward.
- M. Push, don't pull. If it is necessary to move a heavy object along the floor, push it. You can push twice the weight you can pull.
- N. Remember, when putting the object down, bend the legs. Do not bend over at the waist.

