

ShopTalk

Safe Manual Lifting



What will we do today to prevent an incident?



What's the hazard?

Manual lifting can result in fatigue and lead to injuries of the back, neck, shoulders, arms or other body parts. Continuous lifting/handling activities may cause increasing disorders due to gradual and cumulative deterioration of the musculoskeletal system (e.g., low back pain). Work-related musculoskeletal disorders caused by manual lifting may have serious consequences to workers, and may restrict their ability to undertake a wide range of work and leisure activities.

What can happen?

Trevor is a manager at a retail store. The retail store has a big sale and product needs to be moved from the stock room to the front display area. Trevor is not accustomed or physically conditioned to lifting, but is eager to help. He is not sure how heavy the boxes are, but decides to lift and carry two boxes at once to get the job done faster. Trevor does not ask for help and does not use the hand dolly that is available. As the day progresses, Trevor feels pain in his lower back from the lifts and leaves work early.

Based on the case study, provide two to three questions that could be used to spark discussion:

1. It's better to lift and carry an object, even when it is possible to push or pull it. True or false?
FALSE: Whenever possible, or practical, it's better to push or pull an object.
2. Good physical conditioning is not important to preventing sprains and strains. True or false?
FALSE: Good physical conditioning is essential to improve stamina, which makes you less vulnerable to sprains and strains.
3. For bulky objects or objects exceeding 50 lbs., lift using the buddy system or use a mechanical lifting device. True or false?

TRUE

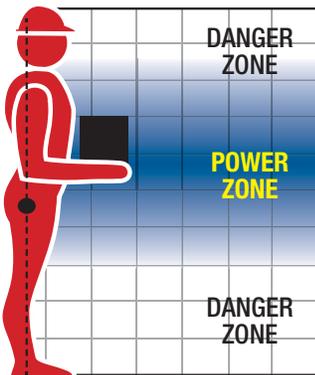


Mechanical Lifting Device

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What precautions can be taken to prevent injuries?

1. **Understand your employer's Material Handling Safety program.**
2. **Arrange your work area(s)** to minimize the amount of heavy lifting required, if possible.
3. **Warm up**, with light activity and stretching exercises before any heavy lifting activity. Do not stretch aggressively as you may over-stretch and injure yourself.
4. **Plan the lift.** Consider the weight of the object, how far you must carry it and your route of travel. When you approach an object on the floor, try to get an idea of how heavy it may be by moving it with your foot or cautiously tilting it off the ground. If the object is too heavy, seek additional help or use a mechanical lifting device such as a dolly, forklift, hand truck or winch.
5. **Try to lift objects in the "power zone".** This is the area between mid-thigh and mid-chest height. Try to avoid lifting objects outside this zone. Use your best judgment when lifting heavy objects. Do not attempt to lift an object that exceeds your strength, and use extreme caution when lifting objects exceeding 50 lbs.
6. **Carry objects close to your body.**
7. **Lift slowly and smoothly.**
8. **Avoid twisting.** Turn the whole body as one unit when changing direction while carrying a heavy object.
9. **Move heavy objects by pushing or pulling**, whenever possible or practical. Pushing is preferable.
10. **Stand close to the object** that you are lifting and be certain that fingers and toes are clear when setting it down.
11. **Lift with your legs** and not your back.



Other resources:

Some additional resources on how to perform safe lifting include **Bulletin 246** and the **SAFE Lifting Tip Card**.

Share your ideas!

If you have an idea for Shop Talk that you think others would benefit from, we'd like to hear about it. Email us: information@safeworkmanitoba.ca.

For more information:

Visit safemanitoba.com or call **204-957-SAFE (7233)** or toll-free **1-855-957-SAFE (7233)**.