

Safety Topic

Safety News

State Compensation Insurance Fund

Issue Four, 2009



Pushing And Pulling

In the course of your work, you may be required to push and pull large and small items, levers, cables, boxes, carts and more. Sometimes, using material handling devices like carts, dollies or hand trucks rather than carrying material is a good idea, but pushing and pulling these devices might strain your back, shoulders and arms if not handled properly.

When you can, push rather than pull. Pushing a load is generally less stressful on your body because you use the weight of your body and maintain a more neutral posture. When you pull, your body is often twisted and you frequently use only one hand.

Many things affect the force needed to start and maintain movement of a load including: the weight of the load, the height where the force is applied (handles, conveyor height), posture (bending forward or twisting when pulling), the direction of the force applied (straight on or at an angle), the slope and condition of the surface, the condition of the item to be moved, and the grip of the worker's shoes on the floor surface.

Reduce the risk of injury when pushing and pulling by use of good body mechanics:

- Tighten your stomach muscles
- Bend your knees
- Lean in slightly toward the object you are pushing
- Lean slightly away from the object when pulling
- Keep your back and wrists straight

- Use you legs and weight of your body to move the object.

When possible, apply force from approximately elbow height. Add handle extensions or provide vertical handles, ensure that conveyor heights are correct, add platforms to workstations or redesign workplaces so that vertical pulls are not above shoulder height or below knee height.



Eliminate the need to push or pull by using mechanical or gravity fed rollers, mechanized carts, vacuum lifts or powered equipment. Use a vehicle or conveyor that can accommodate the size and weight of the load you are moving. Ensure that the design and type of conveyance is well maintained and appropriate for the item to be moved. Ensure that you are not exceeding the recommended force for pushing your cart or hand truck. Measure the forces and follow recommended guidelines.

TOPIC REVIEW

Instructor _____

Date _____

Location _____

Attended By _____

Safety Recommendations

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Please forward to the person responsible for your safety program

News about Occupational Safety and Health in Manufacturing

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Employer Education Series

State Fund continues to promote community educational outreach by increasing the quantity and frequency of employer seminars. These seminars are produced and sponsored by State Fund and are open to State Fund policyholders. The seminar topics cover all aspects of worker's compensation and are offered statewide.

As part of State Fund's Employer Education Series, the local State Fund Loss Control departments offer safety seminars dedicated to loss prevention. They feature safety training targeted to specific industries and safety topics of interest to California employers. Various programs in the series are developed in conjunction with State Fund insured Group Programs and external affiliates and partners. Some of these partners are occupational safety and health providers such as Cal/OSHA Consultation Service, the Department of Health Services, and the University of California.

The goal of State Fund's Employer Education Series is to present valuable information from recognized safety and health experts to enable employers to reduce the frequency and severity of workplace injuries, facilitate regulatory compliance, and increase business profits.

The program venues provide the opportunity for attendees to have their workplace safety questions immediately and personally answered by industry experts. The typically half-day seminars are usually held at regional State Fund offices. To learn what programs are scheduled in your area, visit www.scif.com and click on Seminars. □

Reporting Work-Related Injuries

State Fund's Claims Reporting Center (1-888-222-3211) is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for policyholders to report injuries as soon as they occur. Agents will do the necessary paperwork to get the claim started and refer the injured to the designated physician or provider.

Within 8 hours of any serious illness or injury (requiring hospitalization over 24 hours, other than for medical observation or where there is permanent employee disfigurement) or death occurring in the workplace or in connection with employment, employers must report the incident to the Division of Occupational Safety and Health. □

This Manufacturing Safety News is produced by the Safety and Health Services Department of State Fund to assist clients in their loss control efforts. Information or recommendations contained in this publication were obtained from sources believed to be reliable at the date of publication. Information is only advisory and does not presume to be exhaustive or inclusive of all workplace hazards or situations. Permission to reprint articles subject to approval by State Compensation Insurance Fund.

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REMEMBER TO RECYCLE
THIS NEWSLETTER

Safety News

ISSUE FOUR, 2009

S T A T E C O M P E N S A T I O N I N S U R A N C E F U N D

Considering A Safety Incentive Program?

Safety Incentive Programs are designed to reward employees for safe behaviors and participation in employer safety programs, but accidents are not always the result of an unsafe behavior, they usually result from unsafe behavior in combination with an unsafe condition. No safety incentive program can improve on a safety system with fundamental gaps or errors.

Before starting an incentive program, audit and develop your existing safety and training program. Correct deficiencies. Analyze injury and incident reports for root causes. Train employees how to identify and correct hazards. Encourage good safety communication to and from management and between workers.

Once you have an effective safety and training program, involve management and employees to identify the best incentive program for your facility. Choose programs that require and reward proactive safety actions such as inspecting the work area, reporting hazards, making safety suggestions, participating in safety committees, attending and/or giving a training, completing documentation, etc.

Active involvement in safety programs builds safety awareness and safe behavior. Implementing a system of low-cost improvements resulting in measurable impact allows employees to identify, track, and correct workplace hazards. Safety bingo, safety “bucks,” and safety recognition awards can be tied to positive safety behaviors and involvement that you want to reward.

Carefully consider if you will “reward” required behaviors (e.g. wearing protective equipment, following procedures) so you don’t send the message that these activities are “optional.”

Avoid incentive programs that are based on no- or low-injury, incident, and near miss numbers that may promote under-reporting. Don’t cancel your incentive program if there is an accident or injury. If you base the program on positive behaviors and leading indicators like trainings, hazard correction, and process improvements, the program should not be affected by lagging indicators such as injuries, claims, and costs.

Define and communicate the rules and goals of your incentive program. Unequally managed or team vs. team programs can cause low morale and decrease safety. Decide how long to run the incentive program; keep it fresh with periodic changes.

Choose milestone goals that promote progress and improvement. Choose appealing rewards like money, gift certificates, food, movie tickets, company logo items, free tools, sporty safety equipment, a premium parking spot, time off, etc. Rewards can be issued on the spot, at a periodic celebration, or in a silent auction environment. Avoid “everything or nothing” goals and ensure that the “prize” is not the main motivator, both potential pitfalls that discourage employees and promote cheating or under-reporting. □



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The Expert's Corner

Prevent Injury from Backpacks, Purses, Laptops, and Wallets

People are used to hearing about ergonomics at work, but rarely think about the everyday items used to carry “stuff” that may contribute to physical discomfort and injury. The information below focuses on the ergonomics of what we use to carry our smart phones, computers, and other personal items.

Backpacks are used by people of all ages; unfortunately, they are often overloaded and packed incorrectly. This has contributed to an increase in reported back, shoulder, and neck pain.

- Wear both straps over both shoulders with the backpack over the mid-back muscles.
- Avoid the shoulder straps from being too loose or too tight.
- Keep the weight of the backpack within 10-15% of the user's bodyweight. Carry only what is needed and organize the contents by placing the heavier items closest to the back.

Purses have grown in size and weight and, as



the saying goes, “the bigger the bag, the more stuff will fill it”. Single-strap purses cause uneven loading of the back muscles and restrict blood flow at the shoulder.

- Keep purses as light as possible by carrying only what is essential.
- Avoid thin straps, long straps, and chain handles.
- Regularly switch shoulders when carrying.

Laptop bags are typically single-strap models,

carried over one shoulder. The weight of the laptop and other bag contents can place considerable strain on the shoulder muscles, restrict blood flow, and pinch nerves.

- Consider using a bag with wheels or a two-strap backpack.
- Alternate carrying the bag by switching sides and holding it down close.
- Avoid using a sling-style messenger bag.

Wallets may be smaller, but they can contribute to extreme pain in the low back. Sitting on a wallet in the back pocket can cause damage to key nerves in the back. Always remove the wallet from the back pocket when sitting and/or driving. Consider a thinner, smaller style wallet and carry only what is necessary. □

Kristy Schultz, MS, CIE, is a Certified Industrial Ergonomist with State Fund and is based in Northern California.

Stay Alert To Fatigue

Statistics show that worker fatigue is a contributing factor in many serious injury incidents. Fatigue is often a problem for those who work long shifts; drive trucks and other vehicles; operate machinery; and pilot ships, planes, or trains. That's why it's important for employers to provide fatigue awareness and prevention training and to schedule work to allow for fatigue recovery.

Fatigue can be mental or physical. It can impair concentration, alertness, judgment, and work performance. Although, fatigue is

primarily the result of inadequate sleep or insufficient rest, other contributing factors include individual fitness; repeated or cumulative stress (mental burnout); environmental conditions such as heat, cold, vibration, or altitude; task endurance or monotony; and the time of day or night the activity takes place.

Because sleep deprivation is the primary cause for fatigue, workers should ensure they've had adequate sleep and rest before they make critical decisions, drive vehicles,

operate machinery, or manipulate controls. They should know that rest and sleep are not the same. While sleep restores the mind and body, resting only temporarily restores energy but doesn't have the lasting effects of adequate sleep.

Fatigue can affect reaction time, manual dexterity, and decision-making. It's easy to be lulled to sleep by the hum of an engine, the warmth of a heater, the monotony of a

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Supervise Safety By Example

Workers, especially new workers, tend to follow by example. For that reason, it's essential that supervisors set a good example by practicing and enforcing safe work habits. If supervisors don't value the necessity of following all safety procedures – all the time – then the workers under their direction will not place an importance on working safely.

Safety is really nothing more than getting workers to perform their jobs correctly. And what supervisory function is more important than getting workers to do their jobs properly? Accidents and injuries, in any operation, are the evidence that work is being interrupted. These interruptions reduce efficiency and reflect on a supervisor's ability to get workers to do their jobs properly.

Emphasis on the safe way to do the job is really emphasis on the right way to do the job. Accidents are simply proof that something is wrong; that jobs are not being performed the way they should. Every accident represents an interruption of the operation. Their frequent occurrence also means that the jobs are not being performed at peak efficiency and productivity.

Some supervisors take the stand that nothing should interfere with productivity or the work process. The fault in this reasoning is that safety is

being considered as something separate and apart from the work process. The fact is that no work operation can be efficient and run smoothly unless safety is an integral part of it.



The accident problem will never be solved, as long as safety is something that's considered to be "not really all that important" or something apart from essential supervisory duties. Supervisors cannot do an effective job of preventing accidents until they recognize and accept the fact that safety is an integral part of good, interruption-free job performance that can only be achieved by getting each worker to do the job properly. A key function of a supervisor is to be a "role model" and advocate for safe work performance. □

Continued from previous page

continuous road, of staring at an instrument panel, and by dim lights or the dark of night. So, workers should recognize early signs of fatigue such as a lapse in attention or not remembering the last ten miles or ten minutes. During long periods of continuous work activity or when workers notice that they're "glazing over" or feeling drowsy, they should take a break from what they're doing, pull off the road and take a nap, or ask a coworker to "take over" for a few minutes of rest.

At least once every two hours during an eight-hour

shift or whenever feeling fatigued, workers should vary the activity, re-adjust positions, take a short break, walk around, take deep breaths, eat a light and healthy snack, talk to a coworker, or even sing or talk out loud. Since dehydration increases the effect of fatigue, drinking plenty of non-caffeinated liquids throughout their work shift is also recommended.

However, the most important factor in preventing fatigue is for workers to get adequate sleep and sufficient rest. □

Be Safely Clean With Good Hygiene

Workers who practice good personal hygiene can prevent the spread of germs and disease, reduce their exposures to chemicals and contaminants, and avoid developing skin allergies, skin conditions, and chemical sensitivities.

One way to assure good hygiene is to wear personal protective equipment (PPE) such as face protection, gloves, coveralls, and boots. Workers should inspect, clean, decontaminate or replace their protective equipment frequently to make sure it isn't damaged and won't collect or absorb irritants.

Periodic hand washing throughout the day is basic to good hygiene; scrubbing with soap and water helps remove germs, contaminants, and chemicals. It can also prevent exposure by ingestion and cross-contamination. Workers should wash their hands before they take breaks at work to eat, drink or smoke; after they use the restroom; and before, during, and after preparing food. To control the spread of germs that can cause the flu or common cold, workers should wash their hands whenever they cough, sneeze, or blow their noses, and whenever they are around someone that is sick.

Showering and face washing after work is also a good idea. Proper personal hygiene and hand protection can help keep workers productive and on the job. □

