



AMERICAN SUBCONTRACTORS ASSOCIATION HOUSTON CHAPTER

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ACCESSING SAFETY KNOWLEDGE (ASK) SHEET: HEAVY LIFTING

Employees are constantly looking for a short cut which often leads to increased risk of injury. One example of this is heavy lifting. Back injuries far *outweigh* any other injury resulting from heavy lifting and there are many ways to reduce the frequency and severity of these injuries.

Preventing back injury:

When attempting to prevent injuries from heavy lifting, it is important to focus on ergonomics. That is to say you can't focus on one risk factor, you must take into account engineering, environment and human capabilities and limitations. Consider these aspects:

- Organization of work flow
- Job design/redesign (including environment)
- Pre-placement procedures
- Training

Some examples of how to utilize the above aspects:

- Eliminate heavy lifting
 - Know the acceptable limits
- Decrease lifting demands
 - Allow more time for repetitive lifting
 - Alternate heavy tasks with lighter tasks
 - Team lifting
- Reduce stressful body movements
 - Provide materials at a work level adjusted to the worker
 - Eliminate excessive bending
 - Ensure sufficient space is given
- Pace of work and rest breaks
- Reducing the times an object needs to be moved
- Improve environment conditions
 - Monitor the temperature
 - Use proper lighting where needed
- Change work area layouts
- Training
 - Inform the worker of the hazards of lifting
 - Demonstrate ways to avoid unnecessary stress
 - Prepare to lift by stretching
 - Use a wide stance and a good grip
 - Lift smoothly without jerking
 - Avoid twisting

It is important to cover these items with your employees. Educating them that it is ok to rest is imperative to keeping healthy and happy employees.