Toolbox Talks – Material Handling Basic Knowledge

You stand a better chance of remaining fit and pain-free if you stick with the basics in lifting and handling materials.

Many painful injuries happen to construction workers because they forget several basic manual material handling suggestions. Here are a few pointers about lifting and handling:

- First, think of your tender toes, in case something heavy drops. Always keep those toes of yours under protective steel cover.

- Think of your hands. Wear good, tough gloves when you handle anything rough, sharp or splintery.

- When you prepare to lift a load, bend your knees and crouch down, keeping your back reasonably erect. Let your leg muscles bear the main strain rather than the lower back muscles.

- Before you heave-ho, be sure you’ve got a secure grip and solid footing.

- Keep the load close to your body to minimize the strain. Lift smoothly – don’t jerk as you lift.

- Size up the load – can you easily lift or move it? If not, get help.

- See that fingers and toes stay in the clear when lifting and handling.

- Don’t twist your body when carrying a load; pivot with your feet instead of your spine.

- Plan your path of execution and make sure it is free of debris and obstacles.

- Push rather than pull.

- Use equipment (dollies, carts, two-wheelers, hydraulic/electrical hoists or lifts) to move loads whenever possible. 45-50 lb. loads should be the maximum weight to deal with.

- Make sure work levels are at waist height when standing and elbow height when sitting whenever possible.
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