



# AVOIDING SPRAINS & STRAINS

Today's Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Disclaimer: This publication is designed to provide accurate and authoritative information in regard to the subject matter covered. However, it is to be used for reference purposes only and is not intended to cover all aspects of the topic presented.

Sprains and strains, like back injuries and torn ligaments, account for more than 50% of all reported injuries. They often require a significant amount of recovery time and work restriction. Reduce your exposure to these serious injuries by adopting a process that includes minimizing manual material handling hazards such as heavy and repetitive lifting, repetitive reaching, and carrying of material. A pallet jack, fork lift, or other mechanical means should be considered as the first choice during the pre-planning. Before the start of work, consider how to:

- Stage material close to where it will be used.
- Stage materials off the ground preferably at waist height, especially items that are heavy or frequently used to prevent stress.
- Raise material from ground level even if it's only a small percentage of the time. Simple solutions such as strapping three to four pallets together or using saw horses with plywood or Bakers scaffold to raise materials off the ground can have great effect.
- When possible, work from platform ladders, aerial lifts, or scaffolds so you can turn your feet and the body to eliminate twisting and reaching.
- Position scissor lifts at the proper working height when possible. Don't get into the habit of working overhead more than you have to.
- Have material delivered in small "just in time" quantities that weigh less and are easier to transport.
- Arrange for tools such as forklifts, pallet jacks, pipe hoists, or carry alls to reach material positioned out of the power zone and also to move heavy material.
- Use low vibration tools. Compare vibration levels from different vendors before purchase.
- Minimize high force, awkward postures, and vibration by providing assists such as hand carts, motorized carts, dollies, power hand tools, anti vibration gloves, and floating seats.

Conduct regular material handling and lifting inspections. Look for places where the principles discussed above are violated such as:

- Materials (conduit, lumber, pipe, etc.) placed on the floor or ground.
- Tools or equipment on the ground or floor (i.e., chop saw on ground).
- Work methods that encourage repetition or awkward postures. For example, how many times does a worker unnecessarily pick up material off the ground and then place it back on the ground before making final installation?
- Trailers or gang boxes improperly laid-out and labeled, with heavy items or repeatedly used items stored on the top and bottom shelves.

You depend on your body to work hard all day, every day. Make sure that you're taking advantage of the tools and equipment available that will allow you to stay in the field for as long as possible. Don't forget to stretch in the morning and again before you go to bed.

**Attended By:**