

VILLAGE OF BLOOMINGDALE BACK INJURY PREVENTION

I. INTRODUCTION

The National Safety Council (NSC) found that back injuries account for roughly 22 percent of all work-related disabling injuries and 49 percent of workers' compensation costs. Injuries to the back, result in more full duty restrictions since both most labor intensive as well as many office work functions are limited.

II. MANAGEMENT COMMITMENT

Village management must have a visible presence in back injury prevention initiatives to make them effective. This means Department Directors and all Supervisors must participate in, demonstrate a commitment to safe practices, and communicate with employees at all levels, by engaging in the following:

- A. Communicating your concern about back injuries.
- B. Encouraging questions and co-worker support/assistance.
- C. Reviewing OSHA logs, accident and absentee records to identify areas where back injuries are occurring and identify specific actions to reduce those injuries.
- D. Evaluating work processes to determine how to reduce manual material handling and improve both work station design and work methods.
- E. Reducing manual material handling as much as possible through applicable engineering and administrative methods.
- F. Training employees in proper lifting methods.
- G. Observing employees at work to see if the above is having the desired effect.

III. RE-EVALUATING WORK METHODS

A. Improve the Work Practices and Hazardous Reduction - Steps to accomplish these objectives include:

- 1. Minimize all material movement.
- 2. Automate material movement, where possible.
- 3. Use mechanical assistance for handling heavy loads.
- 4. Coordinate the overall material flow between operations and throughout the building.

B. All Lifting: If manual lifting cannot be avoided, make every effort to minimize hazards. Apply these simple guidelines:

- 1. Take a balanced stance with feet placed shoulder-width apart. When lifting something from the floor, squat close to the load.

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2. Keep your back in its neutral or straight position. Tuck in you chin so your head and neck continue the straight back line.
3. Grip the object with your whole hand, rather than only with your fingers. Draw the object close to you, holding your elbows close to your body to keep the load and your body weight centered.
4. Lift by straightening your legs. Let your leg muscles, not your back muscles, do the work. Tighten your stomach muscles to help support your back. Maintain your neutral back position as you lift.
5. Never twist when lifting. When you must turn with a load, turn your whole body, feet first. Rearrange the space to avoid twisting. People who have to twist under a load are more likely to suffer back injury.
6. Never carry a load that blocks your vision.
7. To set something down, use the same body mechanics designed for lifting.
8. Do not lift from a seated position, as it places tremendous strain on your back. Also, your chair could be unstable and slip out from under you. Instead, stand and move your chair out of the way. Squat and stand whenever you have to retrieve something from the floor.
9. Store materials at knee level whenever possible instead of on the floor. Make shelves shallower (12-18") so one does not have to reach forward to lift the object.
10. If you must carry a heavy object some distance, consider storing it closer, request a table to rest it on, or try to use a hand truck or cart to transport it.

C. For Heavy Lifting:

1. Use mechanical devices to bring materials to waist level to reduce bending, stooping and twisting movements.
2. Decrease material weight and size, or reduce the weight and size of containers.
3. Reduce storage heights by storing items on skids at lower heights.
4. Use hand trucks, dollies, conveyors, slides, casters, wheels, ramps or inclines to reduce manual efforts associated with pushing or pulling.

IV. OFFICE EMPLOYEES

- A. Employees involved in heavy lifting and other manual labor are not the only ones susceptible to back injuries. More and more office workers are also missing workdays due to back pain. Sitting too long at a desk puts more strain on the lower back than any other activity. To relieve this strain, office employees should periodically stand up and stretch, minimally, at least once every two hours.

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- B. The following precautions are recommended to minimize back injuries for office employees:
1. Provide well-designed chairs that support a comfortable posture and allow the user to comfortably sit in different positions.
 2. Adjust the height of the chair and backrest to meet individual employee needs.
 3. Arrange workstation to minimize frequent twisting, overreaching or other awkward movements.

V. WHAT YOU CAN DO

Preventing a back injury is much easier than repairing one. Because your back is critically important to your ability to walk, sit, stand, and run, it is important to take care of your back. Most back pain arises from using your back improperly, so learning a few basic rules about lifting, posture and proper exercise can help keep your back in good shape.

- A. **Exercise to Strengthen your Back and Reduce Stress:** Having strong back and stomach muscles is important in order to ease the work your back is put through each day. By doing simple back-toning exercises, you not only strengthen your back, but also reduce stress. Check with your doctor as to the best exercises for you before beginning any exercise program.
- B. **Weight Reduction:** Being overweight exerts extra force on back and stomach muscles. Your back attempts to support the weight out in front by swaying backwards causing excess strain on the lower back muscles. By losing weight, you can reduce strain and pain in your back. Check with your doctor for the most appropriate diet plan for you.
- C. **Maintain Good Posture:** You can prevent many back pains by learning to sit, stand and lift items correctly. When you sit down, don't slouch. Slouching makes the back ligaments, not the muscles; stretch and hurt, thus putting pressure on the vertebrae. The best way to sit is straight, with your back against the back of the chair, with your feet flat on the floor and your knees slightly higher than your hips. Learn to stand tall with your head up and shoulders back. Do not slouch.
- D. **Maintain Good Posture While You Sleep and Drive:** Sleep on a firm mattress or place plywood between your box springs and mattress for good back support. If your mattress is too soft it could result in a back sprain or sway back. Sleep on your side with your knees bent or on your back with a pillow under your knees for support. Drive with your back straight against the seat and close enough to the wheel so your knees are bent and are slightly higher than your hips. A small pillow or rolled shirt/towel could be placed in the curve of your back to provide additional lower back support and assist in maintaining proper posture when driving
- E. **Plan Your Lift:** Lifting objects is often a mindless task, and unfortunately, many people perform their lift incorrectly resulting in unnecessary strain on their back

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and surrounding muscles. In order to lift correctly and reduce strain on your back, it is important to plan your lift in advance. This means to think about the weight of the object you will be moving and the distance you will be moving it. Is it bulky? Will you need help? Do you see any hazards that can be eliminated? Think about these factors whenever you do any type of lifting.

F. **4 Simple Step to Follow When Lifting Any Size Object:**

1. **Position Yourself Correctly in Front of the Load:** Once you have planned your lift, the next important step is to align yourself correctly in front of the load with your feet straddling the load - one foot slightly in front of the other for balance. Raise head up to lock back in position. Slowly squat down by bending your knees, not your back and stomach. Using both hands, firmly grab the load and bring it as close to your body as you can. This will help distribute the weight of the load over your feet and make the move easier.
2. **Lift With Your Legs, Not Your Back:** Once the load is close to your body, slowly straighten out your legs until you are standing upright. Make sure the load isn't blocking your vision as you begin to walk slowly to your destination. If you need to turn to the side, turn by moving your feet around and not by twisting at your stomach.
3. **Set the Load Down Correctly:** Once you have reached your destination, it's equally important that the load is set down correctly. By reversing the above lifting procedures you can reduce the strain on your back and stomach muscles. If you set your load on the ground, squat down by bending your knees and position the load out in front of you. If the load is set down at table height, set the load down slowly and maintain your contact with it until you are sure the load is secure and will not fall when you leave.
4. **Get Help, If Needed:** If the load is too heavy, bulky or awkward for you to lift alone, find a friend to help you carry it. If no one is available, is it possible to break the load into two smaller loads? Or, can you locate a cart or dolly to help you move it? Look for simple solutions to help make the move easier on you and your back.