CrewSigned

Safe Lifting Toolbox Talk

5-minute read-aloud · Last reviewed November 24, 2026

Back injuries are some of the most common injuries at work, and once you hurt your back, it is easy to hurt it again. Many of those injuries come from lifting, carrying, pushing and pulling. Today we are going over how to move things without wrecking your body.

Before you lift, plan it. How heavy is it? How far does it need to go? Is the path clear? Is there a good place to set it down? Test the weight by tipping one corner. If it is heavier than you expected, or awkward, or you cannot get a good grip, do not try to muscle it.

Use equipment first. Carts, dollies, pallet jacks, hoists and forklifts do not get hurt. Order material in smaller packages when we can, and have it delivered close to where it will be used so we carry it less. Ask for help or a machine any time a load is too heavy or too awkward for one person.

To give you a sense of it, the NIOSH lifting guidelines start from about fifty-one pounds under perfect conditions: a compact load held close, lifted straight up from about waist height, with a good grip and no twisting. Every time you reach out, bend low, twist or lift often, the safe weight drops, sometimes by half or more.

When you do lift, get close to the load with your feet about shoulder width apart. Bend at your knees and hips, not your waist, and keep your back straight. Get a firm grip. Lift smoothly with your legs, without jerking. Keep the load close to your body, between your shoulders and your knees.

Do not twist. Twisting while carrying a load is one of the fastest ways to hurt your back. Turn by moving your feet, not your waist. Set the load down the same way you picked it up.

For team lifts, pick one person to call the moves. Lift together, walk together and set down together. Make sure everyone can see where they are going.

Warm up before heavy work, especially on cold mornings. Take breaks and switch tasks when you are doing a lot of lifting, because tired muscles get hurt more easily.

If you feel pain, stop. Report it early, before a strain becomes a long-term injury.

Discussion questions

1. What is the heaviest or most awkward thing we will move by hand this week, and how should we move it?
2. Which carts, dollies, hoists or lift equipment do we have on site, and where are they?
3. How do you and a partner agree on when to lift and when to set down?

OSHA standard

OSHA Ergonomics guidance
https://www.osha.gov/ergonomics

SOURCES
Applications Manual for the Revised NIOSH Lifting Equation (NIOSH 94-110): https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/publications/numbered/94-110.html
Simple Solutions, Ergonomics for Construction Workers (NIOSH 2007-122): https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/publications/numbered/2007-122.html
OSHA Safety and Health Topics, Ergonomics: https://www.osha.gov/ergonomics

This talk does not replace training that an OSHA standard requires. Scripts are based on OSHA and NIOSH publications and rewritten in plain language.

Safety Meeting Sign-In Sheet

TOPIC

Safe Lifting Toolbox Talk

COMPANY

JOB / SITE

DATE

TIME

PRESENTER

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