

Jason Mechanical Corp

Tool Box Safety Talk

Back Injuries

Occupational back injuries are generally caused by falling or improper lifting, such as lifting an object that is too heavy and/or bulky; not having a good grip; and/or improper bending or twisting. If you cannot comfortably lift an item, get help!

If your spine were perfectly straight, which it isn't, and the object you were carrying were placed on your head, the weight on your lower spine would be the weight of your upper body plus the weight of the object. The load on your back increases at a tremendous rate the farther out from your spine the object is carried due to mechanical disadvantage. Keep objects as close to you as you can when lifting them. Lift with your legs, not your back.

Take shorter strides when carrying loads to lessen the strain on your muscles and back. To increase your stability and balance, your feet should be at a wider stance than normal, approximately the width of your shoulders.

Wear proper footwear for maximum traction. Be aware of the condition of the surface on which you are walking. Ice, mud and damp surfaces are slippery.

Types of accidents that can lead to back injury include:

1. Slips, trips, and falls (the most common of accidents). Slips, trips, and falls can be prevented by something as simple as watching where you are going. Maintain a clear line of sight when carrying an object.
2. Falling from heights at the workplace. Employees working at heights significantly reduce their risk of back injury when protected from falling by using a guardrail system, a safety net system, or a personal fall arrest system.
3. Vehicular accidents. Wearing a seat belt/shoulder harness will greatly reduce the likelihood of injury.

There isn't one type of fall or accident noted above that can't be prevented through exercising care, good judgment, and foresight.

Should a back injury occur, particularly as a result of fall or accident, be aware of these symptoms: pain, tingling, numbness, or inability to move arms or legs. Should these symptoms occur, an ambulance should be called, and the injured employee should **not be moved** unless there is a greater immediate life-threatening hazard. If the injured employee must be moved, keep the head, neck and back together as a unit; avoid bending or twisting the body; and do not let the head fall forward or backward. Improper movement could injure the spinal cord and cause permanent paralysis.

