

## Weekly Safety Tip

### WHO'S GOT YOUR BACK?



Proper Lifting and Carrying Technique

In an ideal work team environment we like to think that we all have each other's backs. However, when it comes down to taking care of the physical health of our backs and spines, the responsibility falls onto the individual person. Statistics show that nearly 80% of Americans will suffer from back pain or back injury at some point during their lives. Back strains are second only to the common cold for lost work days.

The 3 most common causes for back pain are also the most easily prevented.

**Incorrect posture:** When sitting, remember to keep your back straight against the backrest and your feet flat on the floor. Get up and stretch periodically. Mom was right when she said "sit up straight". When standing for a long period of time, be sure to keep your head, shoulders, and waist in line. No slouching!

**Improper movements:** Squat down to pick up heavy or awkward objects instead of leaning over. Bend your knees and use your legs instead of your back.

**Repetitive motion or lifting:** Automation is a very effective method to eliminate the lifting and ergonomic risks for musculoskeletal injuries. Use carts, lifts, cranes, or hoists whenever possible.

#### True or False

- Q1:** Lifting techniques are not a significant contributor to back strains.
- Q2:** Strengthening and stretching exercises can help prevent back injuries.
- Q3:** A person is more likely to injure their back doing heavy repetitive lifts than during a single lift.
- Q4:** Yoga therapy can strengthen back muscles and help reduce back pain.

#### Answers

**A1:** False. Bend at the knees and not your waist when lifting to save strain on your back. You can minimize your risk by recognizing the activities and postures that lead to back injuries and making proper adjustment. Identify the potential hazard and take action to eliminate the possibility of injury.

**A2:** True. Strong stomach muscles and good physical conditioning are important for preventing back strains, sprains, and pains.

**A3:** False. Poor lifting techniques over time can contribute to a weak back and lead up to the eventual lift that "broke the camel's back."

**A4:** True. Research studies published by Harvard Medical School and others reported a significant reduction in pain and functional disability by the yoga group when compared to a control group who maintained usual medical care.