Proper Lifting

It’s hard to enjoy a normal, happy, and successful life with a bad back. The back contains one of the most critical muscle groups in the body, as well as the spinal cord and associated vertebrae and discs. Municipal employees must often lift materials to put them into place or move them from one location to another. Back injuries are cumulative; a lot of small injuries lead up to the big one. It is, therefore, important to remember the key elements of proper lifting.

How to Lift Correctly

- Prepare
  - Protect your feet and hands with safety footwear and work gloves.
  - Warm up with stretches.
  - Test the load first.
- LOOK
  - Keep your head up and looking forward.
- STABILIZE
  - Take a wide stance, with one foot slightly forward.
- GRIP
  - Use both hands, and grasp opposite corners.
- LIFT
  - Lift using your legs.
- BALANCE
  - Keep your back bent to balance the load.
- TIGHTEN
  - Tighten your abdomen and breathe out as you lift.
- HOLD
  - Hold the object close and keep your back straight.

If it’s too heavy, use a lifting device or get someone to help.

Guide for Discussion

Preparing to Lift

- Do you need help? Get help if needed (more people or lift equipment).
- Do you need to stretch before preparing to lift?
- Determine the weight of the materials.
- Determine your ability to handle the load.
- Wear safe shoes.
- Wear gloves to protect your hands if the surface is rough.
- Make sure you have a clear walkway.
Making the Lift
- Center the load between your legs and shoulders.
- Always bend with your legs.
- Keep your back straight. “Lift like an elevator, not a crane.”
- Lift with your legs. (You can feel your leg muscles doing the work).
- Keep the load close to your body. (Hug the object you are lifting).

Moving the Load
- Keep your back as vertical as possible.
- Keep the load close to you.
- Don’t twist your body—move your feet.
- When lowering your load, bend with the knees and keep the back straight.

Remember to follow these rules of lifting and you will give “your back a break rather than breaking your back.”

See a Medical Professional as Soon as Possible If...
- There is a “popping” sound with the injury.
- You can’t move the injured joint or limb or bear weight on it.
- The limb buckles when the injured joint is used.
- There is significant swelling, pain, fever, or open cut.
- There is numbness.
- The pain gets worse or doesn’t go away.
Remember

The only thing you will prove by lifting more than you should is that your back is a poor substitute for a forklift. Think before you lift—every time. Keeping in good shape makes good sense, and good sense is the cornerstone to safety.

Lifting & Carrying
There’s
a Wrong Way . . .

and
a Right Way!

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Workplace Safety Works!
Sprain & Strain injuries are the leading type of workplace injury among CIRMA member employees. They can be prevented!

Symptoms of Sprains
Sprains tend to have symptoms more localized to the injured joint. You may feel a tear or pop in the joint. Pain is usually immediate, and depending on the severity of the injury, it may not be possible to use the joint. Signs and symptoms of sprains include:
- pain,
- swelling,
- bruising,
- instability of the joint, and
- reduced range of motion.

Symptoms of Strains
Sprains & strains to the back are the most common. They may be prevented by using proper lifting and carrying techniques.

Strains, whether acute or chronic, have symptoms localized to the injured muscle groups or tendons. Pain can be felt over a small or large area. Pain can be immediate in an acute strain, or it may be delayed in the case of a repetitive motion injury. Signs and symptoms of strains include:
- pain,
- inflammation,
- muscle spasm or cramping,
- muscle weakness, and
- bruising.

Prevention
Use good work practices.
Avoid awkward, static positions or working outside of optimal or neutral positions. Proper lifting practices and good posture significantly reduce the stresses placed on muscles and joints.

Stay in good physical condition.
Obesity, poor physical fitness, poor eating habits, and low agility increase the risk of sprain and strain injuries.

Rest when necessary.
Sprains and strains develop when fatigue outruns the body’s recovery system.

Recognize signs and symptoms of injury.
Avoid making an injury worse: seek medical care when you experience pain or other signs and symptoms of a sprain or strain injury.

A fall is a common cause of a sprain & strain injury, often to the back, ankles, or wrists. Wearing proper footwear and maintaining good walking surfaces help prevent these injuries.

81% of overexertion injuries to CIRMA member employees result from improper lifting, carrying, bending, reaching, pulling or pushing motions.

Repetitive movements are another cause of sprain/strain injuries. Ergonomically correct work practices will help prevent these chronic injuries.

“Helping members build better, safer communities to live, learn, and work in.”
Tailgate Safety Talk Sign In Sheet

Topic: **Proper Lifting**

Agency: ________________________________________________________________

Crew: ________________________________________________________________

Supervisor/Talk Leader: ________________________________________________

Date: ____________________________

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