

## TOOLBOX TALK

# Manual Handling & Lifting

### WHY THIS MATTERS

Back injuries account for nearly 1 in 5 workplace injuries. Manual handling — lifting, carrying, pushing, and pulling — is the leading cause of musculoskeletal disorders. Most back injuries are permanent and life-changing, but nearly all are preventable.

**36%**

Of serious injuries caused by manual handling

**25kg**

Recommended max lift weight for one person

**100%**

Manual handling injuries are preventable

### 6 Steps for Safe Lifting

Follow these steps every time you lift — protect your back for life:

**1**

#### PLAN THE LIFT

Assess the load weight, shape, and grip points. Clear your path. Get help if it's too heavy.

**2**

#### STAND CLOSE TO THE LOAD

Position your feet shoulder-width apart, one foot slightly ahead. Get as close as possible.

**3**

#### BEND YOUR KNEES, NOT YOUR BACK

Squat down using your legs. Keep your back straight and your core tight.

**4**

#### GET A FIRM GRIP

Use your whole hand, not just fingers. Ensure the load is balanced and won't shift.

**5**

#### LIFT WITH YOUR LEGS

Push up through your legs while keeping the load close to your body. Never jerk or twist.

**6**

#### KEEP THE LOAD CLOSE

Carry at waist height, arms close to your body. Turn with your feet, not your spine.

### Before You Lift — Quick Checklist

- Can you handle this load alone, or do you need help?
- Is your path clear of obstacles and tripping hazards?
- Are you wearing appropriate footwear with good grip?
- Can you use a mechanical aid instead (dolly, forklift, hoist)?
- Do you have a clear place to set the load down?

## Know Your Risk Factors — Before Every Task

- Weight:** Is the load over 25 kg? Get help or use a mechanical aid. Never guess — check first.
- Shape:** Awkward, bulky, or uneven loads shift your center of gravity. Repack or get a second person.
- Distance:** The further you carry, the greater the fatigue. Plan rest stops or use a cart for long distances.
- Frequency:** Repetitive lifting causes cumulative damage. Rotate tasks and take regular breaks.
- Height:** Lifting from floor level or above shoulders is highest risk. Use shelving at waist height.
- Environment:** Wet floors, cramped spaces, uneven ground, and poor lighting increase risk dramatically.

### Common Mistakes That Destroy Your Back

- ✗ Bending at the waist instead of the knees — your spine takes the entire load
- ✗ Twisting while holding a heavy load — the #1 cause of disc injuries
- ✗ Lifting loads that are too heavy alone — ego doesn't protect your spine
- ✗ Rushing and jerking the load up — smooth, controlled movements only
- ✗ Carrying loads far from your body — doubles the stress on your lower back

### Safety Tips to Remember

- ✓ When in doubt, don't lift alone — ask for help or use mechanical aids
- ✓ Warm up before heavy lifting — stretch your back, legs, and shoulders first
- ✓ Push rather than pull — pushing puts less strain on your back
- ✓ Split heavy loads into smaller ones — two trips are better than one injury
- ✓ Listen to your body — if it hurts, stop immediately and report it

## Discussion Questions for Your Team

1. What are the heaviest items we lift regularly on this job?
2. Do we have mechanical aids available? Does everyone know how to use them?
3. Has anyone experienced back pain from lifting on this project?
4. Can we reorganize storage to keep heavy items at waist height?
5. What is the proper way to lift an awkward-shaped load?

### TOOLBOX TALK SIGN-OFF

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Supervisor: \_\_\_\_\_

Project: \_\_\_\_\_ Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Attendance sheet attached: [ ] Yes