

# BACK CARE – BASIC LIFTING

## IDENTIFY

Construction involves lots of manual lifting. Back, neck, and shoulder injuries are common. Manual lifting in cramped or awkward conditions increases the risk of injury.

## COMMUNICATE AND CONTROL

Avoid lifting above shoulder height. This causes your back to arch and puts a lot of stress on your shoulder and on the small joints in your spine.

Don't try to catch falling objects. Your muscles may not have time to coordinate properly to protect your spine. Push rather than pull. Pushing lets you maintain the normal curves in your back and puts less stress on the spine.

The risk of injury increases when:

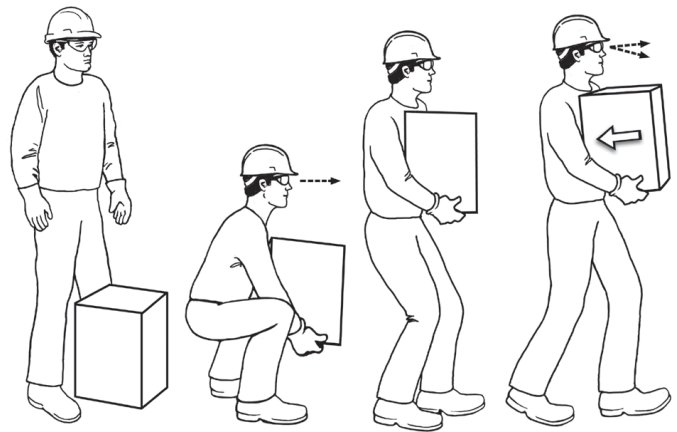
- Lifting in cramped spaces.
- Lifting while in awkward positions.
- Lifting heavy or irregular-shaped objects.
- Performing repetitive lifting tasks.

If not addressed, these types of injuries can become so severe that you may not be able to do your job anymore.

Safe lifting starts with planning:

- Size up the load.
- Make sure the path is clear.
- Get help if you need it.
- **Get as close to the load as possible.** This is very important. Our lifting capacity is reduced the further away we are from the load.
- Put yourself in the best possible position for the lift.
- Try to avoid twisting from the waist, reaching out, and leaning over material or equipment when you lift.
- Use a well-balanced stance with one foot slightly ahead of the other.
- Tighten your stomach muscles as you start to lift.
- Keep your lower back in its normal curved position and use your legs to lift.
- Pick up your feet and pivot to turn. Don't twist your back.

- Lower the load. Maintain the curve in your lower back. **You can hurt your back just as easily lowering a load as you can lifting it.**

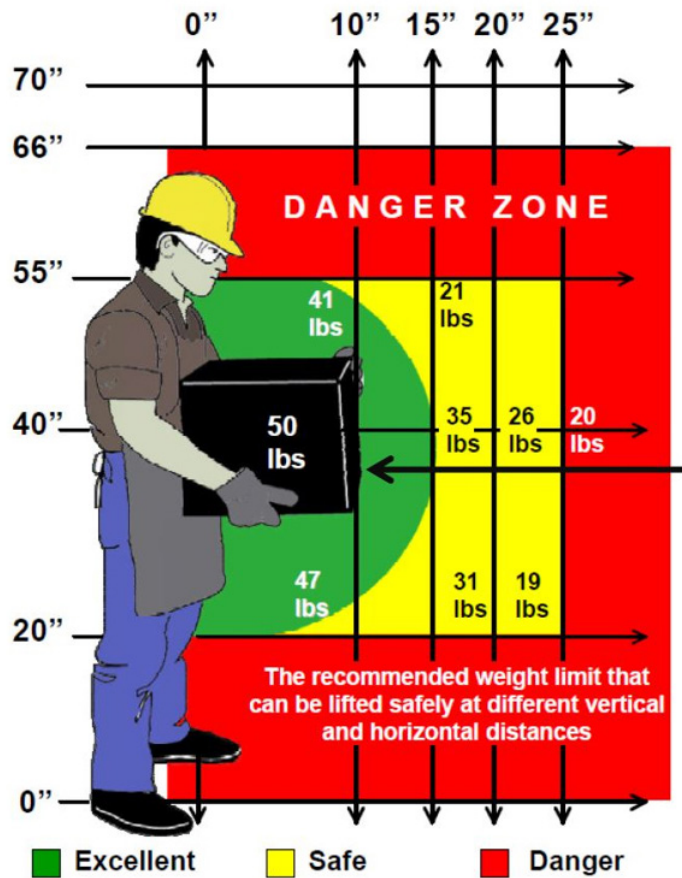


### Two-person lift

Partners should be roughly the same height. Before the lift, both partners should agree on the following:

- Type of lift (waist-high, shoulder-high, etc.).
- Who will take charge.
- How they will lower the load.

Here is an example of a worker's safe lifting zone:



# THE QUIZ

- List the most common injuries in construction:
  - \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_\_\_
- Workers should avoid lifting above shoulder: TRUE \_\_\_\_\_ FALSE \_\_\_\_\_
- The risk of injury increases during work tasks — list two:
  - \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_\_\_
- Safe lifting starts with planning — list three:
  - \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_\_\_
- List two factors that could reduce injury while lifting or carrying material:
  - \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_\_\_
- List the three items workers should agree on when conducting a two-person lift:
  - \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_\_\_

**ANSWERS:**

1. Back, neck, shoulder; 2. TRUE; 3. Cramped spaces, awkward positions; 4. Size up the load, get assistance, get close to the load; 5. Keep your back in the normal curved position, pivot your feet; 6. Type of lift, who is in charge, how to lower the load