



VITALS

for Medical Transport Professionals

A Weekly Safety Newsletter

The Benefits of Training

Training is sometimes described as a "compression of experience." In addition, when properly performed, it reduces the "error" in the "trial and effort" method of gaining knowledge and skill through experience alone. Good training works well. You see it used extensively in the military, technologies, and virtually all walks of life.

"Canned" training can work well, but ask, "What do we really need?" Make an assessment of your needs first, then search the market to determine whether training for your needs are available. It is usually cheaper and faster than developing your own. Sometimes, however, although time-consuming and costly, building your own training program is necessary. Your time and expense will pay off in reduced mistakes.

Employees also appreciate training and want to improve their own skills and knowledge. Training is an excellent component to your driver retention program.



Avoiding Back Injuries

Whether you're suffering from a pulled muscle, sprain, charley horse, or backache, chances are you could have prevented it. More than 250,000 workers injure their muscles by using improper materials handling methods each year. It happens when climbing in and out of trucks and handling objects.

Your back is one area of the body that seldom returns to its former delicate structure after an injury, because repairs are rarely 100 percent effective. Precautions should always be taken to prevent injuries and accidents, especially those that affect your back.

The most common source of muscle ache and pain is poor materials handling methods. One work injury out of four results from incorrect handling procedures or from using the wrong equipment. When you straighten up after bending over, muscles, vertebrae, ligaments and discs in your back bear more than a quarter of a ton of strain. If you use your back muscles at the same time, the weight of the object is multiplied 15 times.

Translated into lost time from work, such aches and pains cost nearly \$70 million a year, most of which is spent on pain killers in a futile attempt to relieve the aching back. Because we bring most muscle aches and pains on ourselves, the best medicine is a dose of prevention.

Oil spills, clogged aisles, tools lying on the floor, and the act of climbing in and out of a cab can produce falls, which often result in back injuries. But since the bulk of back injuries result from poor materials handling techniques, these techniques and suggestions may help prevent such injuries.

Materials Handling Techniques:

- Face the load and avoid twisting your body.
- Determine the center of gravity in order to keep the load balanced.
- Watch out for protrusions that could cause cuts or other types of injuries.
- Keep the load close to your body and carry it at knuckle height. Don't jerk the load.
- Make sure the path you're taking is free of obstructions or slipping hazards.
- Know your limits and get help with heavy or awkward loads.
- When you set the load down, watch for pinch points.

These reminders may help you on the job:

- Gear your activity to your age and physical condition. Physical exertion is an excellent body builder, but it should not be performed in excess. Stop and rest when you feel tired.
- When entering or leaving a cab, use the handgrips and make sure the step-ups are dry and clear. If you have a job that allows little movement, it is important to watch your posture and change your working position as often as you can. Don't become tense, rest the muscles that are constantly in use.

Take time each day to remind yourself of what you are doing. In short, use your head to save your back.

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