



VITALS

A Weekly Safety Newsletter For Medical Transport Professionals

Mike Szczygiel (Segal)
888-969-8033
meszczygiel@thomcoins.com

Our Workforce Is Growing. How Can That Be Bad?



According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), in 2007 every state but Colorado had a population in which 1 out of 5 people were obese. Nationally, 66 percent of all adults 20 and older are overweight or obese. We think about how this applies to the patients we move. Do we ever stop to think that this also means that the normal weight worker is becoming a minority?

While not all of us are required to perform rescues in which we need to use personal fall arrest systems, some of the physics involved merits discussion. Capital Safety, a fall protection manufacturer, has performed studies which have shown that a 310 pound individual in a harness can exert 3,000 pounds of force on the cable lanyard when dropped only a few inches. What sort of forces do you think can be exerted on an ankle when a 310 pound individual misses a step getting out of a van?

Not surprisingly, a study published in the *American Journal of Epidemiology* (Vol.166, No. 2) showed that personnel having a Body Mass Index (BMI) that placed them in the overweight or obese categories are more likely to get hurt at work. 7,690 hourly workers in some manufacturing plants were observed for three years. Over that time period it was found that 29% of the workers were hurt at work at least once. 85% of those hurt were either overweight or obese.

Other studies have shown that obese workers use more sick leave, take more time to recover from an injury, have more weight related complications when injured, and have medical expenses that are five times greater than those for normal weight individuals. A partial list of obesity related health problems includes: Coronary Heart Disease, Type II Diabetes, Various Cancers, Hypertension, Stroke, Liver and Gallbladder Disease, and Sleep Apnea with Respiratory Problems.

Carrying too much personal fat makes it tougher to carry patients who have too much personal fat. Think that adds to the stress of the job? It gets scarier. A study published in the *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine* (Vol.51, No.6) found that stress was an independent risk factor for heart attack and stroke in police offices. Think that, at times, our stress is similar to that of police?

Nobody is promoting discrimination against heavy people. The last time I had a normal Body Mass Index was in utero. There are services that have started charging more to transport people over a certain weight limit, because it takes more resources to safely move them. Shouldn't we be making an investment so that we can safely move ourselves?



Sponsored By:  THOMCO

This publication is provided for information purposes only and is not intended as a complete or exhaustive source of compliance or safety information. This "Safety Brief" is advisory in nature and does not warrant, guarantee, or otherwise certify compliance with laws, regulations, requirements, or guidelines of any local, state, or Federal agency.