TEAM LIFTING (2 PERSON LIFT)

Introduction: Lifting heavy items is one of the leading causes of injury (overexertion and cumulative trauma) in the workplace. Team lifting must be coordinated with all actions communicated between team members. When you use smart lifting practices and work in your power zone, you are less likely to suffer from back sprains, muscle pulls, wrist injuries, elbow injuries, spinal injuries, and other injuries caused by lifting those heavy objects. Training all by itself, without making changes to the workplace, is often not effective in preventing injuries. Often workers are taught “proper lifting techniques” and then sent out to work under conditions that do not allow them to use these techniques. Communication is essential. Following are safety guidelines to ensure safe team lifting and carrying techniques:

- Size up the load and check overall conditions. If the weight, shape, or size of an object makes the job too much for one person, ask for help. Do not handle it on your own. A rule of thumb is to use one person for every 40 pounds.
- Wear proper personal protective equipment (PPE) to avoid finger injuries and contact stress. Ensure that gloves fit properly and provide adequate grip to reduce the chance of dropping the load. Wear non-slip soled footwear to provide sure footing.
- Make sure there is enough space for movement and that the footing is good. Be sure there are no obstructions in the planned path of movement for the load to prevent tripping. Keep an eye on where you place your feet while in transit.
- Workers should be approximately the same size for team lifting. Same size lifters will keep the item being carried well balanced.
- Divide the weight lifted in half when two workers lift together. The risk is not always half that of lifting alone, though. It can be difficult to coordinate lifting between two people, especially when maneuvering around objects or going up or down stairs.
- One person needs to be responsible for control of the action to ensure proper coordination. Select this person before the lift begins.
- Remember; If one worker lifts too soon, shifts the load, or lowers it too soon, either worker may be injured. Coordinate voice signals.
- Along with object weight, lifting frequency and duration, the distance between the hands and the lower back when lifting is one of the main factors in determining whether a lift is a hazard or not. Plan work activities so you can limit the time you spend holding loads.

- Utilize proper handholds, including handles, slots, or holes with enough room to accommodate gloved hands. Use metal bars for reels.
- Move materials from containers with poor handholds or without handholds into containers with good handholds. Use suction devices to lift materials with smooth, flat surfaces. These tools place a temporary handle that makes lifting easier.
- Take regular breaks and break tasks into shorter segments. This will give muscles adequate time to rest. Working through breaks increases the risk of musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs), accidents, and reduces the quality of work because workers are over fatigued.
- Both workers must work together and communicate expected actions. If you need more than the two of you to lift, ask for assistance. Some items can be slid rather than lifted. Use mechanical assistance when available. Mobile transporters can alleviate lengthy lifts.

Follow these steps when team lifting:

1) Take a balanced stance with your feet about shoulder width apart. (It is okay to put one foot behind the object and the other next to it.) Communicate you are ready.

2) Squat down, but keep your heels off the floor (on the balls of your feet). Get as close as you can to the object.

3) Use your palms and not just your fingers to get a secure grip on the object. Make sure that this grip will hold and you will not have to switch your grip later.

4) Lift slowly (without jerking) using your leg, abdominal and buttock muscles while keeping the load as close as possible to you. Continue communicating with helper.

5) Once you are standing “do not twist” when you change directions. Point your feet in the direction you want to go and then turn your whole body. Do not twist with the object while you are walking.

6) To lower the load or place the object, use these same guidelines in reverse. Communicate until lift is over.

Conclusion: Employees are one of the best sources of ideas for fixing jobs, and are the experts at what they do. You may already have thought of ideas for making lifting better. When you are involved in coming up with solutions, you are more likely to use them.