Spot The Safety Violation: Lifting Dos & Don’ts



It’s no wonder this worker is grimacing in pain. Is there a better’and safer’technique he could be using to lift these boxes’

Workers must often lift, move or otherwise handle various materials as part of their jobs. But when handling materials manually, they’re at risk of getting hurt and developing musculoskeletal injuries (MSIs), such as shoulder, neck or wrist sprains.

For example, using an unsafe technique to lift items, particularly heavy ones, can result in back injuries. Just look at the worker in this picture: He’s bent over and not using his legs to lift the boxes, which puts undue strain on his back and can cause an injury.

TAKE 5 STEPS

The OHS laws contain requirements to protect workers when manually moving materials in general. To comply with these requirements, take these basic five steps:

1. Determine whether materials can be moved mechanically, such as with a forklift;
2. If not, assess the risks of moving the materials manually (use this Lifting Hazard Assessment Checklist);

3. Adapt the materials to eliminate or reduce any risks to workers;
4. Develop methods for safely lifting and moving materials, such as the ‘freestyle technique’; and
5. Train workers on these safe work practices. For example, give them this toolbox talk handout on lifting safety.

LIFTING DOS & DON’TS

The National Safety Council recommends that workers follow these dos and don’ts when lifting:

DO:

‘ Eliminate manual lifting whenever possible to help reduce injuries.

‘ Stay in good physical shape if lifting items is part of your job.

‘ Keep the item you’re lifting close to your body. Ensure your feet are close to the load, stand in a stable position with your feet pointed in the direction you’re moving and lift mostly by straightening your legs.

‘ Keep materials within easy reach and have handling aids around in case you need them.

‘ Make sure you have a good grip on any item you try to lift. Test the weight and balance of items *before* moving them. If an item’s too heavy, use a mechanical lifting device or ask a co-worker for help.

DON’T:

‘ Twist your back or bend in a sideways direction.

‘ Attempt to lift or lower an object if you’re in an awkward position.

‘ Feel compelled to lift an item that’s too heavy’get help

instead.

‘ Lift or lower an object if your arms are extended.

‘ Continue to lift an item if you realize it’s too heavy.

‘ Lift above your shoulders or below your knees.