

# US Store Using Exoskeletons to Protect Workers when Lifting



One of the job-related tasks that's most likely to expose workers to the risk of a musculoskeletal injury (MSI) is lifting and/or carrying heavy or awkward objects. For example, if workers use improper lifting techniques, they can easily strain their backs.

One US company is using futuristic technology to help protect workers from developing MSIs when lifting materials. Lowe's home improvement store has launched a pilot program at a store in Virginia in which workers are given a new type of robotic exoskeleton to help them lift heavy items more easily.

The suit is intended to help workers offset some of the strain on their muscles and joints, as they spend large portions of their days picking up and moving heavy and awkward items, such as bags of cement or 5-gallon buckets of paint. The suit, which looks like a cross between a backpack and rock-climbing harnesses, helps transfer the energy of the wearer's movement more effectively using carbon-fiber trusses and motors.

Employers in Canada also have a duty to protect workers from developing MSIs and don't necessarily need to use new technology such as exoskeletons to do so. For example, to ensure that you protect your workers and comply with the requirements in the OHS laws that address ergonomics-related hazards, do the following:

- Identify and assess ergonomics-related hazards
- Implement safe work procedures for activities likely to cause MSIs, such as manual materials handling.
- Train workers on how to protect themselves from MSIs, such as by using safe lifting techniques.

In addition, here's a sampling of just a few of the many MSI-related tools that the OHS Insider has, which you can download, adapt and use in your own workplace:

- Overexertion Toolbox Talk Handout
- 10 commandments of ergonomics
- Model Ergonomics Policy
- Lifting Hazard Assessment Checklist
- Office Ergonomics Risk Factor Checklist

- Model Worker MSI Symptom Survey