



# Material handling on construction sites

Tools, equipment and materials are an essential part of any job site. All of these items require handling and storing by workers, which can present several types of safety hazards.

## **Strains and sprains**

Strains are one of the most common injuries that result in missed workdays. Furthermore, these types of injuries are likely to affect your abilities outside of the workplace. To keep your muscles and tendons healthy, be mindful of material weight and posture while lifting and carrying items.

There are many factors that determine an individual's weight limit. If a load feels uncomfortable or you are unable to maintain proper posture, it's safest to use lifting equipment or get assistance from a coworker. Maintain safe posture by bending at your knees to lift with your legs instead of your back. When turning, move your entire body instead of twisting at your waist.

## **Slips, trips and falls**

When carrying or moving items, it's important to protect yourself from slips, trips and falls. This requires maintaining visibility of your route by keeping items below eye-level and facing the direction you're moving in.

When placing or storing items, it's also necessary to consider the safety of others on site. Avoid placing materials in areas that could present tripping hazards such as walkways, doorways or in the way of other job tasks.

## **Struck-by**

Materials can present a struck-by hazard when placed at heights. Avoid storing items near floor openings or unguarded edges, as workers below could be struck in the event of a fall. Additionally, be mindful of wall height and set items a safe distance back from partial walls.

When moving items mechanically, make sure to stay within the weight limit of the equipment, keep the load centered and secure the items.

## **Cuts, punctures, scrapes**

Some items present a cut, puncture or scrape hazard. Wear cut-resistant safety gloves while handling materials and remove nails from lumber before stacking it. When moving any tools or equipment, make sure it's turned off and any sharp points are guarded.

As a general rule of thumb, practice good housekeeping and don't let debris pile up. Trash and extra materials create unnecessary hazards. Help keep the job site tidy by removing trash and scrap items throughout the day.



**Discussion questions**

1. How often should you clean up materials and debris on a job site?
2. It's okay to lift items yourself as long as they're under 75 pounds. True or false?
3. How should you carry a load in order to prevent a fall?
4. When placing items on the ground/floor, what areas should be avoided?
5. What should you do before stacking lumber?

**Answers**

1. Housekeeping, including removing trash and scrap items, should be done throughout the day.
2. False. There are many factors that determine an individual's weight limit so it's best practice to get help if the load feels uncomfortable or you cannot maintain proper posture.
3. Carry items below eye-level and face the direction you're moving in.
4. Avoid placing items in walkways or near floor openings, unguarded edges or partial walls that end below the materials.
5. Before stacking lumber, remove nails that could puncture others.

**Meeting notes:**

Employee comments/concerns: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Other safety issues to be addressed on the job/facility: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**Training record:**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Job site/facility: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Trainer: \_\_\_\_\_ Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Employee name (print)	/ (signature)	Employee name (print)	/ (signature)
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