

THE

CONNECTION

MARCH 2008

SAFE LIFTING

Hercules' Complex

Most workers know that they're supposed to "lift with their legs, not with their back." but for some reason, few people listen to this warning and, in true Herculean fashion, lift loads that are way too cumbersome. Additional injuries occur when workers try to carry loads that are too heavy, bulky or awkward or that tower over their heads.

Pain in the Back

Unfortunately, breaking the lifting rules often ends with back-breaking results. Back and other lifting injuries are not only extremely painful, they can cause permanent disability and often require surgery. Poor lifting techniques can leave you feeling the pain, not only at work, but at home, where back injuries can severely limit the kinds of activities you can do.

Brain Flex

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, more than one million workers suffer back injuries each year, and back injuries are in the top five most common workplace accidents. When it comes to lifting, try flexing your brain instead of your muscles. Make sure you know all the lifting basics and stick to them.

Accident Fund



Keep Your Hat On

When it comes to personal protection, your best friend on the job is your hard hat. And you've earned the right to wear it proudly, because the work you do is demanding and dangerous. Over the years we've all known someone whose life was saved by a hard hat. Let's talk about how your hard hat does its job, and how you can make sure it keeps on protecting you.

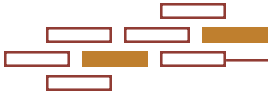
No matter what your hard hat is made of, it is specially designed and certified by the American National Standards Institute to protect you from high impact. How much impact? Well, how about a hammer dropped onto your head from two stories above? A hard hat is able to do this because the shell is flexible enough to absorb some of the impact and transfer the rest of the impact to the special system of webbing inside the hat. The webbing in turn stretches and spreads the remaining shock throughout the head and body. And a hard hat does more than protect you from impact. The space in the hat combines with the reflective surface to help you keep a cool head, 5 to 7 degrees cooler than the average baseball cap, for instance. In addition to protecting from impact and heat, Class A and B hats also protect from certain types of electric shock.

Because a hard hat is carefully designed, it will only work well when you use it right. This means keeping that space between the webbing and the shell open, it wasn't meant to store your cigarettes or gum. Avoid wearing headgear under your hard hat, except for cold-weather liners specially designed for it. The straps should be adjusted to fit you and you only: snug but not tight. Use only your own hat.

Check your hat for scratches, cracks, dents, or brittleness. Wash the webbing in detergent at least every 30 days, replacing it when it gets frayed. Avoid getting creative with the shell. Drilling ventilation holes or painting the hat with solvent-based paints can weaken the shell.

Incidentally, before you go out and test your hats by dropping hammers on them from second story windows, let me point out that a hard hat is designed to protect you from this impact but only once. In fact, any time your hat receives a heavy blow you should replace it. By the same token, avoid dropping or throwing your hat. Some companies automatically replace hats at regular intervals even when there's no visible damage.

Some 70,000 workers are disabled by head injuries each year. Keep your hard hat on, and your chances of staying ahead of those injury statistics are excellent.



IMMINENT DANGER

What Is An Imminent Danger?

An imminent danger is a workplace hazard that puts you at immediate serious risk of death or serious physical harm. It may be a safety hazard such as an unstable trench or exposed electrical wire that could cause a serious or fatal accident immediately under present conditions. It also may be a health hazard such as toxic substances or dangerous fumes, dusts, or gases that could cause death or irreversible physical harm, shorten life, or reduce physical or mental performance.

What Should You Do If You Encounter An Imminent Danger?

If a safety or health hazard puts you in imminent danger of death or serious injury or illness, notify your supervisor immediately and request corrective action. Also ask the supervisor to provide protection to you and your coworkers until the hazard is eliminated or controlled.



Always Be On The Lookout

Think about the last accident that happened at work. Chances are it happened because somebody wasn't looking out. Keeping your eyes open to what's going on around you is a key to preventing construction site accidents.

Most construction sites are like Grand Central Station, with people, vehicles, machines, and hoisting equipment constantly moving around both on the ground and in the air. To protect yourself and those around you, keep a constant lookout - not just in front of you, but behind, around, above, and below.

Watch for moving objects. This includes trucks, hoists, and machinery. It would be a lovely world if the drivers of this equipment were looking out just for your welfare. Since you can't depend on them, assume they don't see you until you know they do. Be extra aware when sitting or crouching down behind vehicles that might back up. By the same token, if you're the driver, look out for people who may not expect you to be coming through.

Look out below and above. Look before dropping anything to the ground from ladders, scaffolds, or second stories. Look below you as you climb down a ladder. Stay away from swinging loads and from areas where debris is being lowered. If it is necessary to work in these areas, make sure those above you know you're there. And look up often to keep track of the movements above you.

Watch your step. On a construction site, your next step could be into an open stairwell, off the edge of an unfinished platform, through a false ceiling or temporary covering, or into the path of a moving truck. Keep your eyes on the path ahead of you so you won't trip on the pile of lumber that wasn't there the last time you walked by.

In order to "look" your best, make it easy for your eyes to do their job. Use proper eye protection and keep your eyewear clean and scratch free. If you need glasses, wear them at all times. Make sure they are either prescription safety glasses or protected by safety goggles.

Keep these points in mind and you will never have to be in the sorry position of saying, "I didn't see," when what you really mean is "I wasn't looking."

We welcome your comments and suggestions about the Connection. To submit articles and/or topic ideas, please call: (269) 629-9708 or send to P.O. Box 460, Richland, Mi 49083. Also visit our website at: www.CLS-Skilledlabor.com