

Job Name: _____ Job Site Location: _____

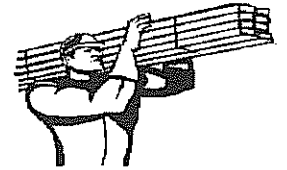
Date: _____ Start Time: _____ Finish Time: _____ Foreman/Supervisor: _____

Topic 131: Personal Protective Equipment for the Back

Introduction: Back injuries are one of the most frequent and debilitating injuries in the U.S. today. Whether the back injury occurred while playing sports, working around the house, during a car accident, or while working at your job, the injury can have a lasting affect over your health, comfort, and lifestyle. Educating yourself as to the nature of back injuries, back injury prevention, proper lifting techniques and proper back support is necessary to reduce the chance of injuring your back. Personal protective equipment for the back is commonly referred to as back braces, safety belts, back belts, and back supports are frequently used to support the back while lifting. Some studies have shown this equipment can reduce your chance of a debilitating and painful injury. However, improper use can weaken your back and increase your chance of injury. Following are guidelines to follow while using this personal protective equipment:

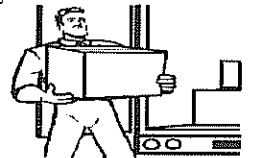
Guidelines:

- **Inspect and test** your belt carefully before use to be sure there are no defects and that the belt fits properly. Belts come in different sizes and are designed for different body types. Wearing the wrong size belt may increase your chance of injury.
- **Never weaken** the belt or strap by cutting or punching extra holes in it.
- **Following the manufacturer's** instructions on the belt for proper care and handling of the belt.
- **Wear the belt** as directed. Most belts are designed to be worn on the lower back and provide lower back support. If you are wearing the belt in the wrong place you may increase your chance of injury.
- **Do not wear** another employee's belt. Many belts have been specially fitted and designed for the user. The belt may be provided by a doctor or physical therapist for the user to protect them from a specific injury. This belt should be labeled and only worn by the specified user.
- **Do not wear** your belt all day. By wearing your belt when it is not needed you may weaken your back by not properly exercising and using your back muscles.
- **Most belts are** designed to support your lower back. If while wearing a belt we lift improperly the strain on the lower back may simply be transferred to the upper back, shoulders, knees, etc. Therefore it is necessary to observe proper lifting techniques even while wearing a belt.

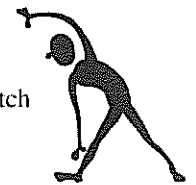


Special Note: Back belts may help maintain the proper curvature of the spine during lifting or physical exertion by applying intra-abdominal compression on the lumbar section of the spine. However, studies have not produced a conclusive body of evidence supporting the effectiveness of back belts as an injury reduction tool. Some concerns related to the use of back belts are that they:

- **Provide a false sense** of security and lead employees to lift loads beyond their capabilities.
- **Are used in lieu** of other more proven options (team lifting, mechanized lifting).
- **Might not be worn** properly.
- **May lead to** decreased abdominal muscle strength with prolonged use.



Conclusion: Back belts can protect a worker when used properly; however, when an individual begins to wear a belt they often feel as if they are suddenly stronger and fail to observe proper lifting techniques. When needed always ask for help and always lift properly (i.e. bend your knees)! The back is composed of the largest and strongest muscle group in the body. This is why traditionally people will "over-work" their back. It is recommended to take 1-2 minutes to stretch your back before you begin work.



Work Site Review

Work-Site Hazards and Safety Suggestions: _____

Personnel Safety Violations: _____

Material Safety Data Sheets Reviewed: _____ (Name of Chemical)

Employee Signatures: _____
(My signature attests and verifies my understanding of and agreement to comply with, all company safety policies and regulations, and that I have not suffered, experienced, or sustained any recent job-related injury or illness.)

City of San Angelo Foreman/Supervisor's Signature: _____

These guidelines do not supercede local, state, or federal regulations and must not be construed as a substitute for, or legal interpretation of, any OSHA regulations.