

COMMON WORKPLACE INJURIES

Injuries in the workplace nationwide number approximately three million every year. This amounts to roughly 8,000 injuries per day, 350 per hour, or six injuries per minute. Workplace injuries cause pain, wage loss, inconvenience, and time off from work. Employers lose valuable workers, productivity, and an estimated \$50 billion dollars as a result. Some of the most frequent injuries are back injuries, falls, and stuck by accidents.

Back injuries are the most frequent type on the job. Others are hitting or striking objects and machine-related incidents. Learning how these types of injuries occur can help protect you so that you do not become a statistic.

Back injuries can occur due to overexertion and improper posture. Every time you lift an item, bend over, or lean forward, you are putting stress on your back. Over time, this can lead to fatigue and injury. Follow these tips to prevent back injuries:

- Use proper lifting techniques by pulling the load close to you, lifting with your leg muscles, and keeping your back straight.
- Use lifting devices, carts, and team lifts whenever possible.
- Watch your posture! Keep your back straight whether you are working, standing up or sitting down. Avoid twisting your back during work tasks.
- Organize work and storage spaces to eliminate lifts from the ground or overhead.
- Sit all the way back into your chair so the seatback supports your spine. Don't "perch" on the edge of your chair, slouch, or lean forward.
- Maintain your overall health and fitness. Strong abdominals and back muscles support your spine and posture.
- Warm up your muscles before you begin work each day with light stretching or movements.

Falls can occur on level surfaces (usually slips and trips) or from a height. Prevent these injuries with the following safety practices:

- Wear proper footwear: slip resistant soles for slippery flooring, boots with heels for climbing, boots with ankle support for uneven surfaces, etc.
- Keep floors swept and clean of debris and liquids that can cause slips.
- Maintain flooring by anchoring floor mats, smoothing uneven surfaces, and clearing clutter to prevent trips.
- Proper lighting in the workplace helps you see where you are walking.
- Use handrails on stairs.
- Walk slowly and deliberately at work; rushing can lead to accidents.
- Don't jump off equipment or vehicles.
- Use proper ladder and scaffold setup and work practices.

- Use fall restraint systems or wear fall protection equipment when required.

Hitting against or being struck by objects in the workplace can cause serious trauma. These injuries can result from vehicle collisions, falling objects, dropped tools, unstable loads, flying debris from power tools and compressed air use. Precautions include:

- Stack, move and, use materials in storage areas in a stable and secure manner.
- Designate safe walking paths around the job site and facility.
- Watch for moving equipment and vehicle at all times.
- Tether or use toeboards to secure tools and materials used overhead.
- Stack, secure, and rig material loads properly and stay clear of them when they are in motion.
- Wear visibility clothing and keep the jobsite well lit.
- Wear a hardhat, safety boots, protective eyewear, and other gear to protect from flying, falling, and dropped objects.

Machine related incidents include caught and crush injuries resulting from moving machinery. These injuries are preventable if workers follow these steps:

- Inspect machinery frequently and keep it well maintained.
- Always keep safety interlocks devices, shields, and guards in place
- Use lockout/tagout to prevent injuries while accessing moving parts for maintenance or repair.
- Tie up loose hair, wear fitted clothing, and remove jewelry around moving equipment.
- Never put yourself between or under moving pieces of equipment without proper blackout procedures.
- Use proper shoring procedures for excavation work to prevent cave-ins.

Do not become a common injury statistic. With good training and hazard recognition, you can ensure your safety on the job.

Content Source: Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA)) (Users of Safety Talk are advised to determine the suitability of the information as it applies to local situations and work practices and its conformance with applicable laws and regulations).

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