



Material Handling Manual Lifting (General)

Safety and Environmental Management System

SEMS 4-21

Material handling (moving or lifting objects) accounts for about one-quarter (1/4) of all industry injuries; the most common injuries being strains, sprains and contusions. The major causes of the injuries are the mishaps resulting from improper lifting, failing to use available equipment and unsafe work practices.

DEFINITION ~ Material (catering terminology): Groceries, laundry bags, equipment

Common injuries during manual material handling are:

- **Strains/sprains:** To muscles and joints by overexertion
- **Hernias:** Strain of lifting causes ruptures in the stomach wall
- **Fractures:** Dropping heavy loads on hands, feet, toes
- **Wounds:** Caused by sharp edges, rough surfaces

To reduce lifting injuries, a hazard assessment should be performed prior to any manual lifting task. Some pointers for the prevention of injuries during material handling that should be included in the lifting hazard assessment are:

1. Inspect the load to be lifted for a lifting point looking for jagged or sharp edges.
 - Use cotton gloves if necessary (can be ordered from SONOCO office).
2. Size up the load. Is it manageable, or will it take two persons? Will it take some sort of mechanical help (cart, hand truck, forklift, crane) due to size, weight & path? If the use of lifting equipment is impractical, "2 man" (or more when warranted) lifts will be used to reduce injury. Manual lifting equipment such as carts and dollies as well as other engineering controls such as conveyer belts and work surface height are provided for all employees and evaluated on a case by case basis according to location. Regardless of location, eliminating lifting from the floor by using simple transport methods and devices (carts & dollies) should be used to prevent injury.
3. Inspect the route where the load will be carried. Look for tripping, slipping hazards.
4. Clean off greasy, wet or dirty items before lifting. Keep your hands free of anything that will prevent a firm grasp such as oil or grease.
5. All employees are trained at hire in the "best practices" used for correct lifting. Use the following correct lifting techniques as trained to prevent most musculoskeletal injuries:
 - Bend at the knees, lift with legs, not back
 - Do not twist when lifting, move feet instead
 - Squat, bend at knees, do not stoop and bend at waist
 - Do not jerk load, use steady movement
 - Keep proper body balance: feet - waist – shoulders
 - Keep object close to body while lifting
 - Wear your SONOCO issued SAFE-T-LIFT BELT.



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6. Keep fingers away from edges where pinches occur. This is very important when carrying through doors or when setting a load down.
7. When handling bulky loads (grocery boxes) divide the load up into manageable items.
8. Always store heavy items on the lower shelves.
9. Think ahead and plan your lift. Proper lifting uses more leg power than back power, so get good footing to prevent slipping and falling. Always wear safety shoes.
10. Keep work areas clear of debris and clutter.
11. **DO NOT CARRY** items that obstruct your view or excessive loads up or down stairs. Always ensure you are able to use the handrails when going up or down stairs. If need be, use elevators, dumb waiters, cranes or other mechanical methods to transport equipment/supplies to or from different levels.

Supervisors and the safety department will periodically evaluate work station configurations, employee work techniques and lifting requirements to access the potential for and prevention of injury.

All lifting injuries will be investigated according to the SONOCO SEMS Policy 3-1 Incident Reporting & Investigation. Any findings of improper lifting from investigations will be addressed into future work practices, safety alerts and trainings to prevent future improper lifting accidents/injuries. Lessons learned will be shared across work crews so that all employees are aware of potential injuries resulting from improper lifting.