



# Prevent Back Injuries

When you have back pain—dull, sharp, achy, or stabbing—it's difficult to focus on your job. Your back pain might even make it impossible for you to work if the injury is severe enough. Construction work has the highest rate of back injuries across all industries except transportation. Let's do something to prevent back injuries.

The number one cause of back injuries is manual material handling. All the lifting, carrying, pushing, and pulling you do puts your back at risk for sprains, strains, and injuries.

**You can make choices that will prevent back injuries:**

- Stretch and loosen up before you start work. If your muscles, tendons, and ligaments are cold and stiff, they are not ready to meet the demands of heavy lifting.
- When the load is too heavy, ask for help, or split the load up into parts you can manage.
- Whenever you can, use a mechanical lifting device such as a hand truck, dolly, forklift, pallet jack, or hoist to help move the load.
- When you're using a cart, hand truck, or pallet jack, it's safer to push the load than to pull it. Your back is more stable when you're pushing, and if you stumble, the load won't run over you.
- Know your personal lifting capacity, and don't exceed it.
- Size up every load and determine its weight before trying to lift it.

- Before lifting an object, make sure you have a balanced stance with your feet about shoulder width apart.
- Lift with your legs and not your back.
- Lift gradually and carefully.
- Keep the load close to your body.
- Avoid overreaching and lifting over your head.
- Do not twist your body when lifting or moving a load. Turn your whole body instead.
- Store materials at waist height when it's practical.
- Working with your back bent will cause fatigue and pain over time. Raise your work to waist level if you can.
- Keep floors and walkways clear and dry. Slips and trips are a major cause of back injuries.
- Don't work beyond your limits. Prolonged lifting reduces your lifting ability, and fatigue will make your lifting technique sloppy. Take occasional rest breaks to let your body recover.
- If you do hurt your back, report the injury to your supervisor right away.

Preventing back injuries is mostly a matter of building good habits. Practice back safety every day, with every lift.

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**SAFETY REMINDER**  
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**Avoiding a back injury is easier than recovering from one.**

**NOTES:**

SPECIAL TOPICS /EMPLOYEE SAFETY RECOMMENDATIONS/NOTES:

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SUPERVISOR: \_\_\_\_\_

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# Prevent Motor Vehicle Crashes

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, more than 32,000 people were killed in motor vehicle crashes on U.S. roadways in 2014. In the same year, 2.3 million people were injured in crashes. A large percentage of these crashes were caused by alcohol impairment, speeding, distracted driving, and drowsy drivers. There's a lot we can do to prevent crashes and reduce the number of deaths and injuries on roads. Here are a few ideas to consider before you start the engine.

**Take a moment to consider whether driving is a good idea—you may not be fit to operate a vehicle.** If you have been drinking or if you are taking any medication that can impair your judgment, coordination, attention, vision, or reaction time, do not drive the vehicle. Ask a friend for a ride, call a cab, or take a bus.

**Consider your state of mind.** Make sure you are well-rested. If you start to feel drowsy once you've started driving, park your vehicle somewhere safe (not on the shoulder of the road) and take a break until you feel more alert. If you are angry or upset, don't get behind the wheel of any vehicle. Your emotions can distract you and lead to an accident.

**Plan the trip and make sure your vehicle is ready.** Try to avoid driving at night and in severe weather whenever possible. If your arrival time is critical, check online for road closures and heavy traffic. Leave a little bit early, just in case. Clean the lights and windows, and make sure your windshield wipers are working properly. Make sure you have

enough fuel. Check your tires. Adjust the steering wheel, seat, controls, and mirrors before you take off.

**Once you're on the road, drive safely:**

- Avoid distractions like drinking, eating, talking on the phone, texting, adjusting the radio or other controls, and talking to a passenger. Driving requires your full attention.
- Make sure you and your passengers wear a seat belt at all times.
- Stay alert. Changing situations on the road could require an immediate reaction.
- Always travel at a safe speed. Consider factors like the weather, road conditions, traffic, construction work, and whether kids, cyclists, or pedestrians are, or might be, nearby.
- If you're driving long distances, stop at least every two hours for a break. Get out of the vehicle, stretch, and walk around a little.
- Watch out for pedestrians, bikes, and motorcycles.
- Ignore horns and rude gestures directed at you. Don't make hand or facial gestures at other drivers. Give angry drivers plenty of room.

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**SAFETY REMINDER**  
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**It's not just drivers and their passengers who are at risk. Each year, thousands of pedestrians and hundreds of cyclists are killed in motor vehicle accidents.**

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# Shortcuts

Admit it. You've taken the occasional shortcut either at home or at work. And since you are still around, that means you weren't severely injured or killed. The problem with taking shortcuts and being okay is that you can get a false sense of security. You might start to believe that shortcuts aren't really so dangerous. But you should thank your lucky stars that you are still alive—and no one else got hurt—despite the risks you've taken. Whether it's an occasional lapse in judgment or a bad habit, remember that every time you take a shortcut, you risk cutting your life short or cutting some part of your body off.

**Consider some of the things we tell ourselves to justify taking shortcuts.**

- "I'll save some time and get the job done faster."
- "It's just this once."
- "I'll only be in danger for a couple seconds."
- "I didn't get hurt the last time."

Your life, and your quality of life, are more important than taking chances, being too lazy to protect yourself, or rushing.

**Here are some common shortcuts; any one of these could lead to an accident or injury:**

- Disabling or removing the guard on a power tool because you think it slows you down.
- Using chemicals without reading the SDSs.
- Using a forklift without inspecting the machine or wearing the seat belt.

- Jumping from one elevation to another instead of walking to a stairway or ladder.
- Choosing to skip writing a pre-task plan before starting a new task.
- Lifting a heavy load without asking for help.
- Overreaching when working on a ladder.
- Smoking around flammable material.
- Working without a hard hat.
- Deciding not to lock out a piece of equipment.
- Ignoring protruding nails.
- Neglecting to wear PPE.
- Building makeshift platforms instead of getting a ladder or setting up a scaffold.

**How do we reduce the impulse to take shortcuts?**

Practicing good housekeeping will help you find the right tool for the job easily, when you need it, so you aren't tempted to make do. Giving yourself enough time to do the job at a safe pace, especially when you're using a new tool, or working in a new or different environment. Planning ahead so that you have all the tools and safety equipment you'll need. Asking for help when you need it.

Take the time to do the job the right way and do it safely. Don't take shortcuts.

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**SAFETY REMINDER**  
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**When you take a shortcut, you're gambling with your life.**

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# Minimize Risk With a Job Safety Analysis (JSA)

A Job Safety Analysis (JSA) is a very effective tool for reducing incidents, accidents, and injuries on the job. Creating a JSA helps you work safer and smarter.

**There are four basics steps to conducting a JSA:**

1. Choose the job to be analyzed.
2. Break the job down into a sequence of steps.
3. Identify potential hazards.
4. Eliminate or control these hazards so there are no near misses, accidents, or injuries.

Conducting a JSA gives you a chance to analyze a job. By writing down each of the steps, and the risks or hazards that go along with each step, you create a complete picture of the job. To do a thorough job safety analysis, you need to consider everything involved in the job: the steps, people, location, environment, tools, equipment, materials, and maybe even other contractors. The goal is to identify potential problems before the work begins and then put controls in place so nobody gets hurt.

**You can do a JSA for any job, but there are some jobs that definitely need JSAs:**

- Jobs that have recurring accidents;
- Jobs that are dangerous or complicated;
- Brand new jobs that we haven't done before;
- Jobs that will be done by new employees; and
- Jobs that are performed very infrequently.

You can write a JSA sitting at a desk, but there is a better way. Whenever it's practical, and when you're not in a hurry to stay on schedule, have one or two people take notes while they watch another person do the job that is being analyzed. Working through the actual task can reveal steps and hazards that might have been overlooked.

Use JSAs to make the site safer and more productive. First, you'll learn a lot when you create the JSA. Second, everyone who follows the JSA will be prepared with the right tools and the right safety equipment; they will be safer and more productive. Third, JSAs are excellent training tools for new employees. An experienced employee can use a JSA to get new employees started quickly, on the right foot, and with safe work practices.

The real world changes quickly and frequently. Review JSAs at least once each year, and anytime part of the job changes—that could be a process, tool, material, or a piece of equipment. If you find that you don't do the job the way the JSA is written, take a few minutes and go over the job with your supervisor and/or another experienced employee. Then, revise the JSA and your habits so that the JSA reflects reality, and your work practices are safe.

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**SAFETY REMINDER**  
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**Whenever a JSA is updated or revised, all employees who do that job need to be informed. They need to review the new JSA and put the changes into practice.**

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# Stairs

We go up and down stairs on a daily basis, both at home and on the job. We don't think much about it, or about the potential dangers of stairways. Slips, trips, and falls on stairways are a major cause of injuries and even fatalities in the construction industry. We can prevent these incidents if we don't take walking up and down stairs for granted. Always use stairs with safety in mind.

**Keep these safety tips in mind when you use stairs:**

- Inspect stairs for defects before stepping on them. Don't use stairs if they seem loose, weak, damaged, or defective in any way.
  - Don't use a stairway if the tread pans have not been filled. Fill empty pans properly with lumber or close the stairway until the concrete is in place.
  - Install at least one handrail on every stairway that rises more than 30 inches or that has four or more risers.
  - Check that handrails are free of protruding objects (nails, screws, splinters, etc.) that could snag your clothes or cause a puncture or cut.
  - Repair or replace rails, treads, risers, and stringers that are loose, weak, or broken.
  - Don't run electrical cords, air hoses, or welding leads down stairways. You can trip if your foot gets tangled in a cord or hose.
  - Clean up slippery spills on stairways immediately.
  - Always hold on to the handrail.
- Keep stairs free and clear of debris, construction materials, and other tripping hazards.
  - Wear slip-resistant footwear and make sure your shoelaces are tied. Don't wear shoes with soles that are worn smooth.
  - Check your shoes and the stairs for mud, ice, and snow before you use the stairs.
  - Take extra care if you're in a finished building and you have to wear booties over your shoes or boots. The booties can be slippery.
  - Walk up and down stairs. Don't rush. Never run up or down stairs, especially if you're carrying a load that makes it hard to see the stairs.
  - Look straight ahead when you are on stairs. Don't let yourself get distracted, look away, or send a text message.
  - Poor lighting can cause you to misjudge where each step is. Be sure there is adequate lighting.
  - Pay attention and make sure your perception of the stairway is accurate. Lots of falls happen at the second-to-last step when people think they have already reached the bottom of the stairs.
  - Take one step at a time—literally. Don't skip steps or jump to the bottom.

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**SAFETY REMINDER**  
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**You're more likely to get injured when you're going down the stairs than when you're going up the stairs.**

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