

Information Bulletin

NUMBER 38

Material Handling Guidelines for the Field Employee

A sprain or strain from material handling is one of most likely ways that you could become injured in your day-to-day activities. Just think of all the carrying and lifting that you do regularly, both on and off the job:

On the Job

- Load and unload your brief case, computer bags, and luggage
- Load and unload product samples from your vehicle
- Carry products and other items to the office of a customer/client or into your office
- Bend and reach into the trunk of your vehicle to grab your items — luggage, briefcase, product, or computer bag.

Off the Job

- Bend, lift and carry your kids or grandkids
- Bend, lift, and carry groceries, laundry, golf clubs, gardening supplies
- Bending over the laundry machine to move clothes
- Loading and carrying luggage to take a vacation or assist visitors

Techniques to Avoid Injury

It is important that you recognize your potential exposure to injury and practice techniques to help avoid injury. Such techniques can include:

- Plan your lift
- Confirm there is a clear path to travel
- Test the weight to make sure you can lift it
- Get help if an item is too large or heavy

- Get close to the object — one foot close to it and one foot slightly behind
- Squat at the knees
- Try to grasp the object from underneath — one hand at the front corner and the other at the opposite corner
- Lift with your legs and keep your back straight
- Lift smoothly — do not jerk.

Avoid the following:

- Twisting — you want to lead with your feet
- Jerking motions
- Reaching or extending out more than 16 inches
- Lifting above your shoulders

Vehicle Considerations

The techniques provided are good ways to handle material; however, being a "field person", you are often lifting items in and out of your vehicle or carrying items to and from your office or an appointment. These conditions require additional planning that could include:

- Keep computer cases and briefcases in your trunk not the back seat. Placing items on the back seat may prompt you to turn, stretch and reach to grab the item when you exit the vehicle
- Clean out your cases on a regular basis. Do not carry unnecessary items as they only add to the weight you have to carry
- Clean out your trunk/vehicle on a regular basis so that you can more easily find and retrieve the items that you need

- Place a towel in your trunk. When you need to lift an item out of your trunk, brace yourself against the bumper to help you make the lift. The towel will help to keep your clothes clean
- Slide items as close to you as possible before making a lift. Use cargo netting or other techniques to keep items from sliding to the rear

When in Airports

- Use the luggage carts or luggage with wheels
- Lift bags smoothly from the luggage carousel and from your vehicle

Choosing Bags, Carrying Cases and Luggage

- Select cases made of light weight (but durable) material
- Keep cases as narrow as possible
- Shoulder straps should be at least two inches wide
- Bag handles should be padded and provide adequate hand space (5 inches for hand spread and 2 ½ inches for hand clearance)
- Wheeled cases should have wheels large enough to maneuver over bumps and through inclement weather

- Use two lighter bags as opposed to one that is heavy
- The lighter bags will help keep the body balanced
- Alternate shoulders

Choosing Carts or Wheeled Bags

- Two wheeled carts should be designed to handle 250 pounds
- Larger diameter wheels decrease force necessary to move the cart or wheeled bag
- Make sure the handle extends far enough so that you are not struck behind while walking. By taking these precautions, you will not only be making your job easier, you will be making it safer!

This bulletin is intended only as a reminder and is offered solely as a guide to assist management in its responsibility of providing a safer working environment. This bulletin is not intended to cover all possible hazardous conditions or unsafe acts that may exist. Other unsafe acts or hazardous conditions should also be noted and corrective action taken