

Back Injury Prevention

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Despite all of the equipment, tools, and machinery that is used in construction, manual labor is still needed to get most work done. What this means is that every worker is exposed to potential injuries to their back by simply doing the normal every day tasks they often don't think about. According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC): "In construction, 25 percent of injuries are back injuries... [and] Every year, a back injury causes 1 in 100 construction workers to miss work - usually missing about 7 workdays, but sometimes more than 30."

OSHA Standard 1926.21(b)(2) says that *the employer shall instruct each employee in the recognition and avoidance of unsafe conditions and the regulations applicable to his work environment to control or eliminate any hazards or other exposure to illness or injury.*

Tasks that can cause or aggravate an existing back injury include:

- Bending, stooping, or squatting
- Lifting materials from the floor
- Pushing heavy materials
- Placing materials overhead
- Shoveling, twisting, or awkward body positions

OSHA Standard 1926.25(a) *During the course of construction, alteration, or repairs, form and scrap lumber with protruding nails, and all other debris, shall be kept cleared from work areas, passageways, and stairs, in and around buildings or other structures.*

- Housekeeping is an important part of preventing back injuries – always make sure work areas are free of clutter and possible trip hazards.
- Cut down on carrying materials whenever possible by having them delivered close to where they will be used.
- Use material handling tools like carts, dollies, pallet jacks, and forklifts, if possible, to limit manual lifting.
- Consider new tools and devices to eliminate the need for bending and stooping, like tools with modified or extended handles.

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