Material Handling – Lifting / Back Care

Risks
- Back injury.
- Muscle strain – hands, shoulders and waist.
- Joint injury – hands, shoulders and waist.
- Sprains, strains, slips and falls.

General
- WEAR appropriate footwear, i.e. with adequate traction. Avoid smooth leather soles.
- WEAR suitable gloves when handling objects (if practical).
- WARM up (stretch your muscles) before lifting.
- MINIMIZE manual lifting – i.e. design the workplace to avoid lifts and transfers wherever possible. Use mechanical aids such as hoists and transfer tables.
- KNOW the weight of an item that you plan to lift. Get help for heavy objects, bulky objects, or objects that are awkward or that have slippery surfaces (i.e. difficult to hold on to).
- Grip with the whole hand, not just the fingers. The palms of the hand have a large gripping area and strength.
- AVOID grasping areas near pinch and shear points or the ends of long items.
- KEEP the load close to your body. Face in the direction of the lift to avoid having to turn as the final action of the lift.
- LET your legs do the lifting, NOT your back. When turning, use your legs and your feet rather than twisting at the waist.
- LIMIT lifts to the range between your wrists and your shoulders.
- PLAN before lifting. Anticipate distance, stairs, ramps and obstacles, and know where you are going to set the load down.
- PLAN for clearance to avoid getting pinched hands or fingers.
- PLACE items on blocks or shims on flat surfaces to avoid getting pinched fingers.
- DO NOT LIFT with wet or oily hands.
- DO NOT bend sideways at the waist.
- DO NOT attempt to lift heavy items if you are not in good physical condition or do not lift regularly. Get help or use a mechanical aid.
- DO NOT attempt to jerk an item off a surface to raise it.
- DO NOT drop an item to put it down. Slide it onto a surface then gradually release it.
- KEEP the load close to your body and your back straight.
• FACE in the direction that you are travelling.
• WATCH where you are going.
• WATCH for tripping hazards.
• WALK at an easy pace. DO NOT run
• GRIP under the object and use your whole hand.
• MAKE more than one trip or use a cart rather than try to carry too much.
• USE handrails as a guide by leaning against to help your balance on stairs or ramps.
• DO NOT allow the object you’re carrying to obstruct your vision.
• DO NOT attempt to carry heavy objects too far. If you need to rest, place the package on a solid object and rest or get assistance.
• DO NOT hurry up or down stairs or ramps.
• AVOID carrying objects up and down stairs, if an elevator is available.
• DO NOT attempt to take more than one stair at a time.
• DO NOT carry objects by the straps, tape or packaging cord.

Specific Objects – Boxes and Cartons
• GRASP under the sides to lift and move when possible.
• PULL into your body if carrying for any distance.
• KEEP object between your shoulders. If box / carton larger than distance between shoulders, get assistance in lifting / moving (e.g. other person to lift and cart to move).
• RAISE from a flat surface by grasping the lower corner nearest you body and the opposite upper corner.
• LIFT from the floor by raising the closest end onto your leg then grasping the opposite side.