



Safety Meeting Outline



SMO 03-0901

GETTING ALONG WITH YOUR BACK

By SeaBright Insurance Loss Control

The spinal column and associated muscles form what is commonly known as “the back”. The back represents a critical part of the body’s structure – even a slight movement of the body involves the back. People spend a large part of their adult life at work and, therefore, the spine is often affected by workplace activities. Here are some key points to help maintain a healthy back, while doing common activities in the workplace.

Sitting

Sitting for long periods of time causes stress on the body. This simple activity can exert pressure on the back, legs, neck and shoulders. Unfortunately, many occupations require employees to sit for extended periods of time. How you sit determines the signs and symptoms of prolonged sitting. Neck, shoulder and lower back pain can result from sitting improperly. Your chair should be evaluated for adjustability and support. It is wise for those who sit for extended periods of time to have fully adjustable, ergonomically designed, chairs. To avoid back, neck and shoulder fatigue, sit erect with the back straight and shoulders pulled back. Avoid leaning over and slumping. Learn how to adjust workstation chairs to properly support your back. The height, seat back and seat pan should be properly adjusted to the user’s body, and in relation to the workstation.

Remember, sitting for long periods of time should be avoided, if possible. Tasks and workstations should be evaluated to allow some deviation from extended sitting. Take “micro” breaks that include standing and gently stretching. This helps to relieve pressure on the back, and enhances circulation in the legs. Driving vehicles for long periods of time can also cause back fatigue. Stopping and taking periodic stretch breaks when driving long distances help to refresh the spine and legs.

Bending, Stooping and Lifting

Whenever possible, repetitive bending over and stooping should be avoided. Although bending and stooping is an everyday part of life, work tasks should be designed to avoid repetitive bending motion. When bending or stooping, maintain a straight back. The legs should bend and do the work. Lifting objects increases the likelihood of back stress and strain. The safe lifting zone from which to lift objects is the area between the knuckles and shoulder. Heavier objects should be placed in this area and lifted from this position. Lifting objects from floor level increases stress and strain on the back, and can result in injury. If a heavy object must be raised from the floor, use a forklift, crane or other lifting device to position the object into the safe lifting zone. Employees should be trained to lift only those objects of a size and weight that is safe for one person to lift. Proper lifting is typically described as bending at the knees, keeping the back in its normal arch and lifting primarily with the legs. Don’t reach for objects above shoulder level, as this is outside of your safe lifting zone and can result in unneeded stress on your back or injury. Remember, whenever possible don’t twist, stretch, bend or lean to one side when lifting an object, especially anything heavy.

Standing

Standing over long periods of time can be hard on the legs, feet and spine. Hard surfaces aggravate the problems associated with standing for long periods of time. If you must stand for long periods on a hard surface such as a concrete floor, shock-absorbing mats can be used to stand on. A stool or footrest is a method used to allow changing the position of your legs and back. You can also shift your weight by alternatively raising one foot at a time to help reduce back stress related to prolonged standing. Work surface heights (approximate elbow height) allow employees to stand erect while working. Employees should avoid bending over work areas for long periods of time. Changing positions while standing reduces fatigue. Sitting, standing and using a footrest can lead to fewer back problems and more productive employees.

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SAFETY MEETING AGENDA

DEPARTMENT/JOB SITE: _____ MEETING DATE: _____

1. **Open Meeting & Present safety topic:** _____

2. Read minutes from previous meeting.

3. **Persons present:**

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

4. **Old Business** – Status of previous recommendations. Discuss pending old business if any.

5. **Accidents** – Discuss accidents and near misses that have occurred since the last meeting. Brief summary of accidents to date by number and type. Note any trends. Discuss corrective action taken, or needed. Concentrate on accident causes to make everyone more aware.

6. **Inspection Reports** – Report on findings and recommendations of any inspection reports made since last meeting.

7. **New Business** – Solicit employee suggestions. Discuss new procedures, changes to company safety policy, etc.

TIME MEETING STARTED: _____ TIME FINISHED: _____

MEETING CHAIRED BY: _____ TITLE: _____