



# NORSTEEL SAFETY SENTINEL

## PROMOTING A SAFE WORKING ENVIRONMENT

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## PREVENTING BACK INJURIES

Across all trades, many WorkSafeBC claims are related to overexertion. The most common injuries involve the back and shoulder. Construction is physically demanding but we can manage limits of physical exertion through the increased use of mechanical advantage, teamwork, and techniques that minimize strain on the back and shoulder joints.

### HAZARDS TO BE AWARE OF

- Straining the back or shoulder (large) muscles due to heavy, awkward, or frequent lifting.
- Straining muscles from pushing, pulling, or working with the body asymmetrically.

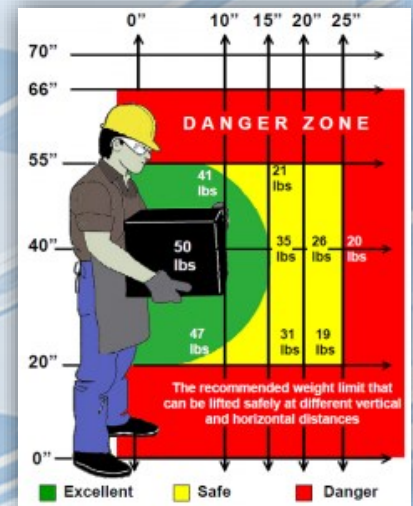


## SAFETY TIPS

The safest way to handle the situation is by mechanical means, using excavators, loaders, forklifts, dollies, come-alongs, pry bars, etc. This is best achieved with planning on material lay-down and accessible equipment. Seek assistance in lifting, carrying, or pushing a load. A worker can safely lift 50 lbs., but some loads are large or awkward or weigh more than this. Additional workers should assist, especially when workers are fatigued at the end of the workday or following continuous physical exertion. Plan the path of travel, coordinate the lift and use lots of verbal cues while carrying.

Practice good techniques – just like lifting weights at the gym.

- Lift gradually, slowly, smoothly & without jerking
- Lift with the legs, not the spine, by bending the hips and knees as needed.
- Keep the load close to the body by straddling and “bear-hugging” it.
- Tip the load up before fully lifting it.
- Support some of the weight of the load on your thighs as you lift and carry.
- Keep feet and legs apart when bending down to pick up an object. Keep elbows tucked in.
- Ensure good footing



### DECREASING THE DEMANDS

Where possible, use mechanical aids. The next step is to decrease the manual material handling demands. There are several ways to achieve this:

- Plan the workflow. Often poor planning of the workflow results in repeated handling of the same object (e.g., when articles are temporarily stored in one place, moved to another, stored again, and moved again).
- Decrease the weight of handled objects to acceptable limits.
- Reduce the weight by assigning two people to lift the load or by splitting the load into two or more containers. Using light containers may also decrease the weight of the load versus other containers.
- Change the type of movement required. Lowering objects causes less strain than lifting. Pulling objects is easier than carrying them. Pushing is less demanding than pulling.
- Change work area layouts. Reducing the horizontal and vertical distances of lifting substantially lowers handling demands. Reducing the travel distances for carrying, pushing or pulling also decreases work demands.
- Assign more time for repetitive handling tasks. More time reduces the frequency of handling and allows for more work/rest periods.