

# Back Safety

## *Safety Training Handout*

You can save yourself a lot of pain and a lifetime of hassles by learning proper lifting techniques and the basics of back safety.

### ■ What leads to back injuries?

- Lifting excessive weight
- Using poor lifting technique such as bending over at waist or twisting with loads
- Reaching overhead for elevated loads
- Carrying awkwardly-shaped objects
- Sitting or standing in one position for extended periods of time
- Working in awkward positions for extended periods of time
- *Contributing factors:* poor physical condition, extra weight and poor posture

### ■ How can back injuries be prevented?

- Use carts and dollies where possible
- Ask for help with heavy loads
- Always use proper lifting techniques
- Stretch before lifting
- Avoid sitting or standing for extended periods of time
- Avoid lifting loads above shoulders where possible
- Slow down during heavy, repetitive lifting and take rest breaks
- Sleep on a firm mattress, get in shape and use good posture

### ■ What's the proper way to lift?

- Test the load's weight
- Place feet shoulder-width apart and close to object
- Bend the knees
- Get a secure grip
- Lift with the legs, keeping back straight
- Lift evenly and slowly with the load kept close to your body
- Avoid twisting torso while carrying load; to change directions, use feet

### ■ What if I have back pain?

- Rest your back and avoid heavy lifting
- For pain relief:
  - Apply cold for 1<sup>st</sup> 48 hours
  - Apply heat after 48 hours
  - Use over-the-counter pain relievers
- Gradually begin gentle stretching
- Consult physician if:
  - Pain persists after resting 72 hours
  - You have a feeling of numbness in your lower limbs