

STANDARD OPERATING GUIDELINE

Lifting and Moving



Department: Operations

SOP#144

Applicable to: All Staff

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Purpose:

To provide guidance on proper lifting techniques and related back injury prevention tips.

Procedure:

Back injury factors

The risk factors associated with back injuries come from a combination of factors. To reduce the work-related risks of lifting and moving items and/or patients, consider the following factors when designing, planning and organizing work tasks.

- Limit the object's weight to a maximum of 50 pounds (whenever possible).
- Reduce the reaching distance.
- Keep the heaviest side of the load next to your body.
- Adopt a stable position with feet apart and one leg slightly forward to maintain balance.
- Start the lift as close to waist height as possible.
- End the lift as close to waist height as possible. Maintain posture with slight bending of the back, hips and knees: lift the load as the legs begin to straighten (**Lift with you legs, not with your back**)
- Avoid twisting the torso. If turning is required, move the feet as the object/patient is carried.
- Reduce the number of times a lift must be repeated.

Back Injury reduction tips:

Workers and their employers have an opportunity to reduce the risks of back injuries before, during and at the end of lifting tasks. For in-station and in the field, consider the following lifting tips.

Before Lifting:

- Evaluate the weight and determine if assistance from your partner or the Fire Department is necessary.

- **If assistance is needed, wait for assistance to arrive before any movement of equipment or patient is made.**
- Make sure you have a clear path for equipment or Patient extraction.
- Make sure you are not going to overload the weight capacity of the equipment.
- Organize work areas so items are not stored on the floor when possible.
- Arrange storage areas so items are not stored above shoulder level.
- Clear the pathways so adequate space is available to set the items down easily.
- Store items in containers with good handles or find a spot to grasp the item securely.
- Know you and your partners lifting limitations.
- Make sure you are using features on the equipment, the tracks on the Track Stair-Chair should be used whenever possible.

During Lifting:

- Only carry one item at a time when possible.
- Secure a stance and put one foot beside the item when possible.
- When lifting, keep the item close to your body.
- Maintain balance posture allowing for a slight bend of the back, hips and knees.
- Lift loads as the legs begin to straighten.
- Move feet in the direction the item is being carried.
- If you are not able to lift or move the item or patient safely, call for assistance.

Ending the lift:

- Keep the item close to the body as it is being placed.
- Move feet in the direction of where the object will be placed.
- Place the item on a surface at waist level when possible.

Tips for Patient handling:

Handling and moving patients is one of the more difficult tasks undertaken by Emergency service providers. Moving and handling patients without the needed resources could put the patient and those attempting to move the patient at risks for injury. Consider the following best practices to help reduce these risks.

Administrative Controls:

- Identify and communicate the maximum weight that both the patient equipment and personal can accommodate.
- Assess the patient's size and weight including the weight of the equipment.
- Assess the patient's ability to assist and support their own weight.
- Know the limitations of the patient transport equipment and do not exceed the limit.
- Know who and when to contact for assistance.

- Provide for patient dignity and comfort when appropriate.
- Develop guidelines for assessing risks not related to patient health.

Onsite Observations:

- Evaluate the weight and size limitations or stairs, steps, ramps, porches and decks.
- Identify hazards that may inhibit moving the patient safely (Carpets, Soft ground, inclined surfaces, narrow hallways etc.)
- Evaluate walking surfaces conditions (grade, grounds, driveways and walkways)
- Determine the adequacy of door opens.
- Evaluate the location of the patient.
- Evaluate the ability to get the patient handling/lifting equipment near the patient.
- Select and utilize the proper lifting device.
- Communicate with your partner or the Fire Department and have a plan.

Lifting and Moving the Patient:

- Know each individual's physical abilities. Do not exceed those abilities, if assistance is needed make sure you call and wait for assistance to arrive on location before any attempts to move the patient are made.
- Think through the dynamics of lifting before attempting to move the patient.
- Lift as a team and communicate.
- Avoid awkward positions as much as possible and use more muscle strength.
- Use proper lifting techniques and keep the weight close to the lifter's body.
- Use the Fire Department to help facilitate patient transport such as holding doors open, moving items out of the way and assisting in backing down stairs.
- Whenever possible limit the lifting to the patient and stretcher only, Utilize a follow-up lift for equipment.
- If assistance is needed to offload the patient at the receiving facility, call for it ahead of time.

Conclusion:

Over one million people lose time from work related back injuries each year. It is estimated that one in two emergency service providers have sustained a back injury: and, one in four sustain a career-ending injury in their first four years on the job. Furthermore, lifting is the cause of about 60% of emergency medical providers injuries. Lifting and moving of patients and equipment is part of emergency medical providers jobs. It is therefore important to understand the risk factors involved in performing these tasks and how to minimize a potential injury. Back injuries can be prevented with proper lift technique and good communication.

