

# HAZARD ALERT

CPWR [O]  
THE CENTER FOR CONSTRUCTION  
RESEARCH AND TRAINING

# BACK INJURIES

YOU ARE AT RISK



## Does your back hurt?

Back injuries are the most common injury in construction.\*

- Construction workers report back pain in higher numbers than all other industries combined.
- Back injuries are the major cause of disability in middle-age construction workers.
- Long recovery times and chronic back problems can mean you will no longer be able to work in construction.



\*The Construction Chart Book, 2013.

## Most back injuries are from:

- Lifting
- Bending at the waist
- Carrying
- Pushing and pulling

A bricklayer lifting an average of 200 blocks – each 38 lbs – per day lifts:

**1 Day: 3.8 tons\***  
about two small SUVs



**1 Week: 19 tons**  
about seven F350 trucks



**1 Year: 950 tons**  
about 2 1/2 fully loaded Boeing 747s



## What do YOU lift in a day?

Find out more about construction hazards.

Get more of these Hazard Alert cards – and cards on other topics.

Call 301-578-8500

Play the Game!



## To prevent back injuries ...



### 1 Let tools do the work

If materials weigh more than 50 pounds, do not lift them by yourself. Use carts, dollies, forklifts, and hoists to move materials – not your back. Get another worker to help lift heavy materials.



### 2 Change your work routine

Re-position your body so that you are not contorted or repeating a motion. Raise your work to waist level. Have materials delivered near your work. Take rest breaks. When you are tired, you can get injured more easily.



Workers use the two-mason lift technique to reduce stress of lifting and twisting.

### 3 Think before you move

Lifting while bending and twisting will cause injury. You can prevent a serious back injury if you **step instead of twist**. Turn your whole body rather than twisting. Lift and lower in a smooth, steady way. Try to handle materials between your knees and chest.

## Back injuries have consequences

- Reduced income
- Medical bills
- Lost work time
- Reduced work life
- Chronic pain

Work with your employer and union rep to prevent back injuries.

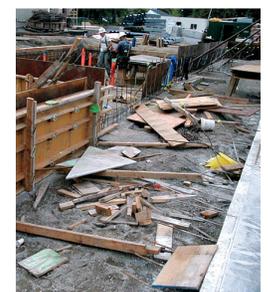
Back pain doesn't stop when you leave work.

**You take it home!**

**If you think you are in danger:**

Contact your supervisor. Contact your union.

Call OSHA  
1-800-321-OSHA



### Last Tip: Housekeeping!

Make sure floors and walkways are clear and dry. Slips and trips are a big cause of back injuries.