

# HAZARD ALERT



# BACK INJURIES

## You are at risk



### Does your back hurt?

Back injuries are the most common nonfatal injury in construction.<sup>1</sup>

- ▶ Construction workers report back pain in higher numbers than all other industries combined.
- ▶ Back injuries are a main cause of disability in middle-age construction workers.
- ▶ Long recovery times and chronic back problems can eventually mean you will no longer be able to work in construction.
- ▶ Workers prescribed opioids for pain relief are at higher risk of addiction.<sup>2</sup>



### Most back injuries are from:

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

### What do YOU lift in a day?

For example, a bricklayer lifting an average of 200 blocks—each 38 lbs.—per day lifts:



### Back injuries have serious consequences

- ▶ Chronic pain
- ▶ Medical bills
- ▶ Increased risk of opioid use disorder
- ▶ Reduced income
- ▶ Lost work time
- ▶ Reduced working lifespan

**Back pain doesn't stop when you leave the jobsite. You take it home!**

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

#### Don't Forget: Housekeeping

Make sure floors and walkways are clear and dry. Plan your route in advance. Slips and trips are a major cause of back injuries.



### To Prevent Back injuries...

## 1 Let equipment do the work

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



## 2 Change your work routine

Re-position your body so your neck and back are aligned and straight. Avoid repeating motions, especially uncomfortable ones. Raise your work to waist level. Ask your employer to have materials delivered and stored nearby where they will be used. Take rest breaks. When you are tired, you can get injured more easily.



## 3 Think before you move

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



Workers use a two-person team lift technique to reduce stress of lifting and twisting.

### Learn more about preventing strain and sprain injuries at

[www.bestbuiltplans.org](http://www.bestbuiltplans.org)

#### Play the games:

- ▶ Lift coach: Plan your route
- ▶ Lift coach: Plan your lift



#### If you think you are in danger:

Contact your supervisor.  
Contact your union.  
Call OSHA

**1-800-321-6742**

### Find out more about construction hazards.

To receive copies of this Hazard Alert and cards on other topics call

**301-578-8500** or visit [cpwr.com/hazardalerts](http://cpwr.com/hazardalerts)



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<sup>1</sup>Bureau of Labor Statistics, Survey of Occupational Injuries and Illnesses Data, Case circumstances and worker characteristics for injuries and illnesses involving days away from work - 2020, Table R2.  
<sup>2</sup>Best Built Plans Contractor Training Program Section 7 -- Preventing Soft Tissue Injuries to Prevent Addiction