

Farm Safety Series

Safe Lifting and Carrying Techniques

Most back injuries among nursery workers in Alabama are caused by improper lifting techniques. The third most common injury among nursery workers in the Southeast is to the back at a 19.2 percent incidence, according to the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH). These injuries can be avoided by using safe lifting and carrying techniques.

Proper lifting entails using the leg muscles instead of the back muscles to lift a load. First, size up the load and check overall conditions. Do not attempt to lift by yourself if the load is too heavy or awkward. Be sure there is enough space for movement and that the footing is good. Be sure there are no obstructions in the planned path of movement for the load to prevent tripping. Balance your weight with your feet apart, placing one foot beside the load and the other behind the object you are lifting. Bend your knees; do not stoop over to pick up the object. Keep your back

straight but not vertical. You can tuck your chin close to your chest to straighten your back. Grasp the load with your palms and fingers and keep your arms and elbows close to your body while lifting. Pick up the object by straightening your legs. This will prevent straining your back. Carry the load close to your body, and do not twist your body while carrying the load. To change direction, shift your foot position and turn your whole body. Watch where you are putting your feet while in transit to prevent tripping. To lower the object, bend the knees; don't stoop.

Team Lifting Must Be Coordinated

If the weight, shape, or size of an object makes the job too much for one person, ask for help. Workers should be approximately the same size for team lifting. One person needs to be responsible for control of the action to ensure proper coordination. If one worker lifts too soon, shifts the load, or lowers it too soon, either worker

may be injured. Both workers must work together and communicate expected actions.

Important Points of Proper Lifting

- Bend your knees to lift an object; do not stoop.
- Keep your back straight by tucking in your chin.
- Lift with your leg muscles, not with your back muscles.
- Get a good grasp on the object with the palms of your hands.
- Keep your arms and hands close to your body while carrying the load.
- Watch your feet to avoid tripping.
- To lower the object, bend your knees; do not stoop.
- Team lifting must be coordinated with all actions communicated between team members.

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Special appreciation is extended to the Farm Safety Association, Inc., Guelph, Ontario for permission to use their Web-based data as a source of information for this article.

For more information, call your county Extension office. Look in your telephone directory under your county's name to find the number.

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New Feb 2005, ANR-1266