



Materials Handling: Lifting and Carrying

Lifting and carrying heavy materials, working in tight or awkward positions, and bending often to lift materials off the ground can injure your back. Construction workers have one of the highest rates of back injuries of any job.

Jeff's Story

Jeff and his crew were told to move 200 bags of dry cement mix from the delivery location to the work area. Each bag weighed 30 pounds. They moved the bags by hand because no forklift or cart was available. Jeff's back began to hurt, but he thought it was just part of the job. The next day, his pain was so bad that he had to leave work and see his doctor. The doctor told Jeff that he had damaged a disc in his lower back and could no longer do manual lifting work.

- ✘ What caused this incident?
- ✘ How could this have been prevented?
- ✘ Have you ever been hurt from lifting and carrying materials at work, or do you know someone who has? If so, what happened?

Remember This

- **Each person** should not lift an object weighing more than 50 pounds. Ask for help with heavy or awkward objects.
- Use lifting equipment like a dolly or powered equipment, such as a skid-steer loader, to move heavy objects whenever possible.
- Work with your coworkers as a team, practice safely lifting heavy objects together and remember that each person **should not** lift more than 50 pounds.
- Keep materials as close as possible to where they will be used.
- Store materials and tools neatly and safely to prevent tripping and other safety hazards.

Safe Lifting Practices:

- Keep your back as straight as possible.
- Lift with the leg muscles to help protect your back.
- Avoid twisting your body while lifting or carrying an object.
- Plan your lifts. Make sure the path is clear and face the direction you're moving before you lift.
- Try out safe lifting practices at www.bestbuiltplans.org.

How can we stay safe today?

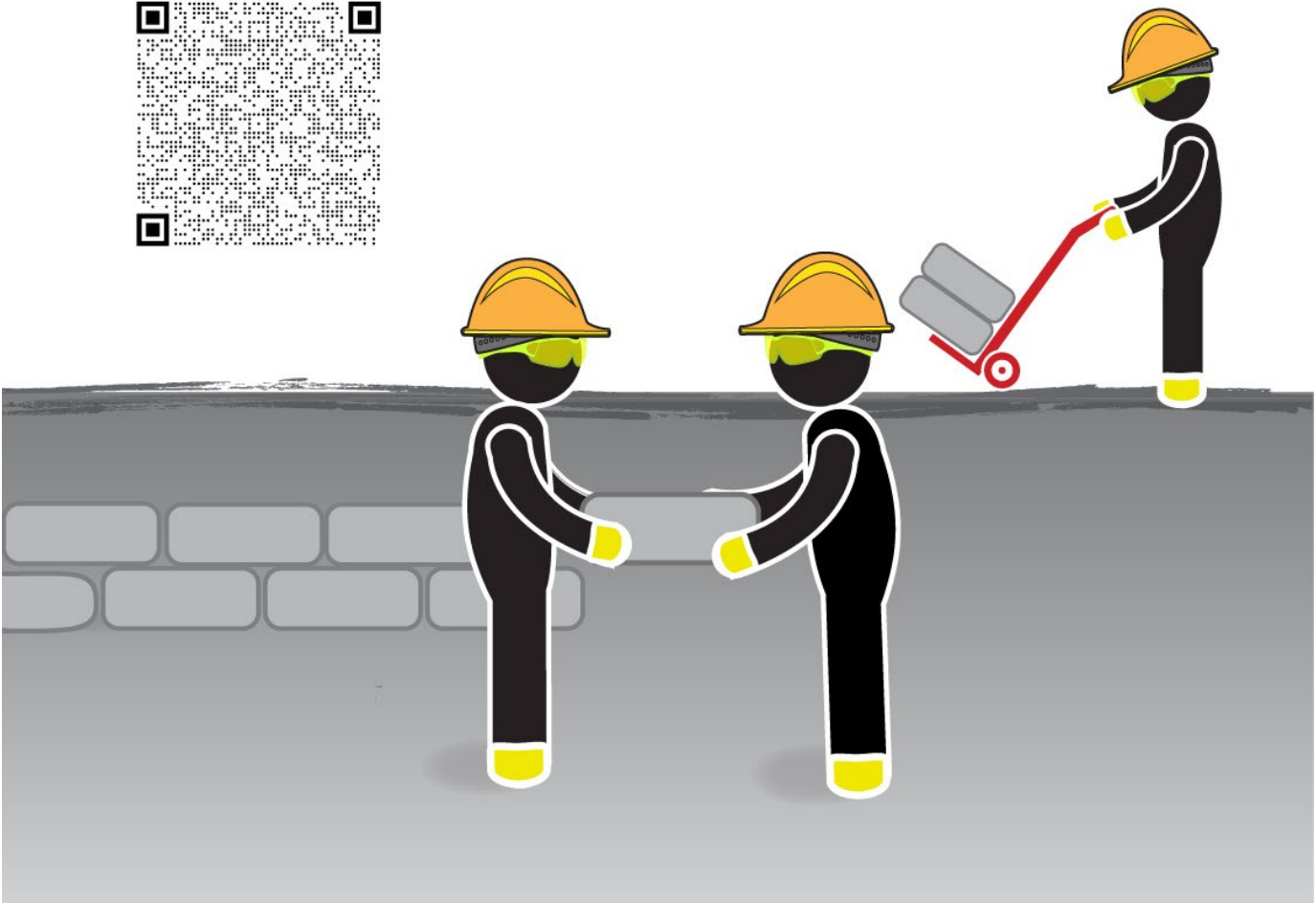
What will we do at the worksite to prevent injuries from lifting and carrying materials and equipment?

OSHA General Duty Clause, Section 5(a)(1) of the OSH Act



Materials Handling: Lifting and Carrying

*Play the CPWR
Manual Material
Handling Games:*



- ✓ Use lifting equipment like a dolly or powered equipment, such as a skid-steer loader, to move heavy objects.
- ✓ Each person should not lift an object weighing more than 50 pounds. Ask for help with heavy or awkward objects.
- ✓ Plan your lifts: make sure the path is clear and you are facing the direction of travel before lifting.

**GET
INFORMATION**

CDC/NIOSH INFO: 1-800-CDC-INFO (1-800-232-4636) | TTY: 1-800-232-6348 | [cdc.gov/info](https://www.cdc.gov/info) | [cdc.gov/niosh/construction](https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/construction)
CPWR: Contact 301-578-8500 | cpwr-r2p@cpwr.com | www.cpwr.com/toolbox-talks
DHHS (NIOSH) Publication No. 2026-119 | September 2026