

HEALTHY BACKS IN THE MECHANICAL TRADES

As a sprinkler fitter, your job requires a lot of lifting of materials and equipment. The situation is worsened when working in an awkward position or in the cold. You stand a far better chance of remaining fit and pain-free if you'll stick with the basics in lifting and handling materials.

Many painful injuries happen to construction workers because they forget several basic manual material handling suggestions. Here are a few pointers about lifting and handling:

- First, think of your tender toes, in case something heavy drops. Always keep those toes of yours under protective cover; wear safety shoes.
 - Think of your hands. Wear good tough gloves when you handle anything rough, sharp or splintery.
 - Use material handling devices whenever possible to move material with minimal exertion. Items such as dollies, carts, pipe stands, come-alongs, two-wheelers, hydraulic/electrical hoists or lifts are designed to protect your precious back—use them!
 - Before you lift, make sure your body is prepared to lift by stretching your back, neck, shoulders, arms and legs.
 - Be sure you've got a secure grip and solid footing.
- Keep the load close to your body, to minimize the strain.
 - Lift smoothly—don't jerk as you lift.
 - See that fingers and toes stay in the clear when lifting and handling.
 - Don't twist your body when carrying a load; pivot with your feet instead of your spine.
 - When a load is too heavy or awkward to handle alone, ask for help.
 - Plan your path of execution and make sure it is free of debris and obstacles.



Whenever possible, use material handling devices designed to protect your back.

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- Whenever possible, push rather than pull.
- Make sure work levels are at waist height when standing and elbow height when sitting whenever possible.
- If you have to work in one position for a long period of time, take time to stretch your back, neck, shoulders, arms and legs.
- Always play it safe and smart. Stick with the basics in all of your lifting and handling of materials and equipment.

