

# Pinnacol Pointers for Safety Group Programs

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ASSURANCE

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## **Simple Steps Toward Safe Lifting in the Workplace**

The two most common injured areas of the body when manually handling materials are the low back and shoulders, and the average claims cost of a back injury from lifting exceeds \$10,000. The following controls can help curb back and shoulder injuries at your workplace:

*Engineering Controls* -- Change or modify tools, equipment or machinery to reduce the physical demands of the job. Use assistive devices (e.g., crane, forklift, conveyor) to handle materials.

*Work Practice Controls* -- Change the way job tasks are performed to reduce the frequency and duration of risk exposure. For example, reorganize the order of job tasks to allow muscle recovery between tasks that require excessive force.

*Administrative Controls* -- These include job rotation, job enlargement, gradual introduction to work and pre-shift warm-up and stretching programs. Another administrative control is team lifting for certain heavy or awkward materials.

*Training Controls* -- Demonstrate these techniques when training employees on safe lifting:

- Get as close to the load as possible before lifting it, and keep the load close once you've lifted it. If possible, straddle the load or slide the load toward you before picking it up.
- Make sure your footing is secure. Do not lift objects that obscure vision and footing. Plan ahead, and make sure that your travel path is clear of obstructions and that there are no slip hazards, such as a wet floor.
- Do not twist while lifting! Move your feet so they point in the direction of the lift as you turn. A good phrase to teach is, "Keep the toes to the load." Lift smoothly and slowly, and do not jerk the load.

### **Pinnacol Resources**

For more information on safe lifting in the workplace, as well as a sample list of detailed lifting guidelines, visit the [Resources web page](#) at Pinnacol.com. Additional resources are available from the [Occupational Safety & Health Administration's ergonomics web page](#) and the [National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health \(NIOSH\)](#). NIOSH and California OSHA also have an excellent [booklet with guidelines on manual material handling](#). Or call Pinnacol's Safety On Call hotline at 303-361-4700 or 888-501-4752. Our safety services team stands ready to answer questions and help you take next steps toward safe lifting in the workplace.

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