Back Safety: Proper Lifting

When it comes to an effective back safety program, lifting properly is one of the key elements. Many back injuries occur when a person tries to lift a load that is too heavy or he/she lifts a load improperly. Improper lifting puts enormous strain on the back, neck, and shoulders and can lead to a variety of painful problems. Proper lifting techniques help to prevent back injuries.

When lifting an object, remember to always:
1. Stand close to the object with a wide stance. Feet should be shoulder-width apart, with toes pointing outward.
2. Bend at the knees and hips, and try to maintain your body's natural curve.
3. Pull the load close to you and grip it firmly.
4. Tighten your stomach, to act as a back support, and lift your head, which will help you lift with your legs rather than your back.
5. Finally, when you're ready to lift, use your legs and keep your back straight.

Try to practice this proper lifting technique, even if you're lifting a very light load.

A note about back belts: OSHA does not forbid the use of back belts nor does it endorse their use. According to OSHA, the effectiveness of back belts in the prevention of lower back injuries has not been proven.

If you suffer any type of back injury while on the job, contact your supervisor immediately. Injuries that are treated early often heal much faster than those that are ignored.