

## BACK INJURY PREVENTION

Line-clearance work is a very physical job, and your back muscles are subject to serious injury. Muscles make your body move. The faster you want to move or the heavier the object is, the more force you must apply – too much force and you will strain/sprain/injure a muscle.



Stretch in the morning, after a 30-minute drive, after lunch or whenever your back 'feels stiff'.

It is important to build a strong, flexible, and healthy back in order to prevent injury. Good back care is mostly a matter of common-sense, healthy lifestyle habits, and knowing when to get help and when to use mechanical aids. In addition, taking a few minutes a day to strengthen and stretch your muscles can prevent injuries and make the job easier on your back.

Proper Body Positioning is “KEY” to avoiding back injury. You can easily injure yourself while pulling or yanking on a pruner pole or overextending while using a chain saw or hydraulic stick saw. If you establish good body positioning including proper body stance (legs shoulder width apart for balance) before beginning a task, you will reduce the amount of effort it takes to perform that task, for example—moving closer to your work to avoid overextending and causing back or shoulder strains; and bending at the knees rather than the waist to reach objects close to the ground.

It is equally important to use **proper lifting techniques**. The young and most fit individual will sustain a back injury if they are inattentive to their body position. Safe lifting means keeping your back aligned while you lift, maintaining your center of balance, and letting the strong muscles in your legs do the actual lifting.

Before lifting anything; ask yourself, “Can I lift this alone, or do I need help? Is it too awkward for me to handle? Should I ask a co-worker for help?” If the load is manageable, follow the steps below to lift properly. By using these techniques, you can learn how to lift safely and save your back from injury.

**Bend Your Knees** - Not at your waist, this helps you keep your center of balance and will let the strong muscles in your legs do the lifting.

**“Hug” The Load** - Hold the objects as close to your body as possible, while at the same time gradually straighten your legs to a standing position and raise your chin.

**Avoid Twisting** - Twisting can overload your spine and lead to serious injury. Make sure your feet, knees and torso are pointed in the same direction when you are lifting.

**Work smart, work within your comfort zone, work close to your body, less force means you are less tired and get more done!**

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