

This fact sheet is relevant for employees working on a farm.

Remember the three steps

Step 1 Identify risk factor.

Step 2 Assess the risk.

Step 3 Take action to eliminate or minimise the risk.

Some hazards

- Continual handling of hay bales.
- Lifting machinery on to the back of a ute.
- Carrying equipment and tools over unstable ground.
- Handling animals.



It is important to remember that injuries, especially to the back, can be the result of stress and strain over time and that the immediate cause is only part of the picture.

Some ways to reduce your risk of back injuries:

- Choose light weight materials.
 - Divide heavy loads into smaller loads.
 - Purchase smaller bags of material.
 - Half fill containers.
 - Get help to share the load.
 - Keep frequently used items at a waist height.
 - Use a small stool instead of squatting.
 - Take breaks.
- Change jobs to give muscles a break.
 - Trolleys can be used to move heavy loads.
 - Special trolleys can be used to move and tilt 200L drums.
 - A fixed hoist or forklifts.
 - Mobile ramps or skids for loading and unloading from trucks and utes.
 - Crowbars, barrows, pulleys, hocks and jacks.

Acknowledgment:

WorkSafe Western Australia www.safetyline.wa.gov.au

Three Steps to Prevent Back Injuries

STEP 1

Identify risk factors in the workplace likely to result in manual handling injuries by reviewing work injury reports, talking to employees and observing tasks being done.

STEP 2

Assess the risk for each hazard you identified and if it may result in an injury. This will help you prioritise the hazards in order of risk and plan action.

STEP 3

Take action to eliminate or minimise the risks. Job re-design is the preferred option. No one single option will necessarily reduce the risk. A combination of different control options may be needed.

Modify the object

- Can the object be made lighter, packed into smaller containers or made less bulky?
- Can the shape or surface texture of the object be changed to make it easier to grip?
- Could the surface be cleaned or the edges less sharp? If it is hot, could it be made cooler?
- Can handles be provided, or some type of sling used to move the object?

Modify the workplace layout

- Store heavier and frequently used items at waist level.
- Raise work level by use of self-adjusting platforms.
- Prevent excessive bending of the back by adjusting work level.
- Provide adjustable storage heights and adjustable work heights.

Rearrange materials flow

- Consider the schedule, timing and the way loads are moved around the workplace.
- Automatic doors can avoid the need to put down a load, or balance a load awkwardly to open a door.
- On a conveyor belt, tilt taller objects so they lie lower and reduce work height.

Different actions, movements and forces

- Can lift tables be used to raise the work level to make materials more accessible?
- Position all tools and materials in front of the employee.
- Conveyors, slides and turntables can be used to change material flow direction
- Provide adjustable, swivel chairs.

Where re-design is not reasonably practicable, or as a short term or temporary measure you can consider providing mechanical aids. Trolleys can help avoid awkward positions, lever and wheel forklifts can reduce effort and avoid slipping, rolling platforms and hoists can avoid lifting and using a jack will support weight.

Team lifting enables load sharing. Lifting partners should be of a similar build and height and should be trained in the lifting technique. One person should be nominated as the team leader to coordinate the lift.

Consult with your employees and ensure they receive the appropriate training and supervision in the correct use or application of any mechanical aid, equipment or safety procedures.

Acknowledgment:

Approved Code of Practice. Manual Handling November 1990. Government of South Australia. www.workcover.com