

# HAZARD ALERT

CPWR  
THE CENTER FOR CONSTRUCTION  
RESEARCH AND TRAINING

# BACK INJURIES

YOU ARE AT RISK



## Does your back hurt?

Back injuries are the most common injury in construction.\*

- Construction workers report back pain in higher numbers than all other industries combined.
- Back injuries are the major cause of disability in middle-age construction workers.
- Long recovery times and chronic back problems can mean you will no longer be able to work in construction.

\*The Construction Chart Book, 2013.



## Most back injuries are from:

- Lifting
- Bending at the waist
- Carrying
- Pushing and pulling

A bricklayer lifting an average of 200 blocks – each 38 lbs – per day lifts:



What do YOU lift in a day?

## Find out more about construction hazards.

Get more of these Hazard Alert cards – and cards on other topics.

Call 301-578-8500

## To prevent back injuries ...



### 1 Let tools do the work

If materials weigh more than 50 pounds, do not lift them by yourself. Use carts, dollies, forklifts, and hoists to move materials – not your back. Get another worker to help lift heavy materials.



### 2 Change your work routine

Re-position your body so that you are not contorted or repeating a motion. Raise your work to waist level. Have materials delivered near your work. Take rest breaks. When you are tired, you can get injured more easily.



Workers use the two-mason lift technique to reduce stress of lifting and twisting.

### 3 Think before you move

Lifting while bending and twisting will cause injury. You can prevent a serious back injury if you **step instead of twist**. Turn your whole body rather than twisting. Lift and lower in a smooth, steady way. Try to handle materials between your knees and chest.

## Back injuries have consequences

- Reduced income
- Medical bills
- Lost work time
- Reduced work life
- Chronic pain

Work with your employer and union rep to prevent back injuries.

Back pain doesn't stop when you leave work.

You take it home!

If you think you are in danger:

Contact your supervisor. Contact your union.

Call OSHA

1-800-321-OSHA



### Last Tip: Housekeeping!

Make sure floors and walkways are clear and dry. Slips and trips are a big cause of back injuries.