



Safety Spotlight

A publication for commonwealth employees

Summer 2016

Material Handling: Pushing and Pulling

Manual material handling, like using a hand truck or utility cart, often requires pushing and pulling heavy loads to move them. This could expose employees to awkward postures and forceful exertion.



Awkward postures can be prevented by:

- Using material handling devices designed for the materials you are transporting
- Pushing the devices using the handles; make sure the handles are large enough to accommodate your entire hand (vertical handles instead of horizontal handles are preferred to allow those of different heights to maintain neutral postures)
- Push instead of pull devices to take advantage of your body weight and avoid pulling materials into your shins or ankles
- Keeping materials at or below eye level to allow users to easily see over the top of the load without bending to the side

Forceful exertion can be prevented by:

- Replacing wheels when they become uneven
- Using devices with pneumatic wheels when moving over bumpy, uneven terrain
- Using elevators and ramps when possible
- Developing good housekeeping practices to ensure floors are clean and don't provide resistance
- Wearing shoes with good traction to maintain footing
- Reducing the size of loads when ascending and descending stairs
- Using curb ramps that allow employees to easily push the device over curbs

Preventing awkward postures and forceful exertion during manual material handling jobs will help prevent injury.

Office Moves

Whether you are relocating offices or purging files, it is important to avoid injury by following these tips:

Before the move:

- Determine if you will have help with the move from contractors or agency staff
- Obtain boxes for the move; boxes with handles are the best choice
- Pack a little each day instead of waiting until the last minute
- Fill boxes to a weight that can safely be carried
- Stack filled boxes no higher than chest high; stacked boxes should not obstruct aisles or passage ways

On the day of the move:

- Wear comfortable clothing and shoes
- Securely tape boxes shut
- Follow safe lifting techniques



More information can be obtained from agency safety coordinators.

Electrical Safety

Electrical hazards in the office or worksite can cause burns, shocks and electrocution. Avoid electrical hazards by:

- Replacing or repairing damaged cords
- Keeping extension cords from running across doorways or under carpets
- Avoiding overloading outlets. Plug only one high-wattage appliance into each receptacle outlet at a time
- Calling an electrician if outlets or switches feel warm



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Working Outdoors: Hazardous Plants

There are many hazards when working outdoors including plants. Below is a description of hazardous plants found in Pennsylvania.

Poison Ivy, Poison Oak and Poison Sumac

- Produces a reaction after contact with sap
- Three leaf pattern with a longer stem in the middle (leaf shape and color vary)
- If you come in contact, wash the area immediately and seek professional medical help if symptoms aren't treatable with over the counter medications



Nettles

- Produces a reaction when hairs become stuck in the skin and inject a mixture of chemical into the body
- Prevent contact by wearing long sleeved shirts and long pants and avoiding plants with hairy stems
- If you come in contact, avoid scratching the area and use over the counter creams to manage symptoms



Giant Hogweed

- Produces a reaction when skin comes in contact with sap and sun exposure
- Prevent contact by wearing long sleeved shirts and long pants, gloves and eye protection
- If you come in contact, change clothes, shelter the area from sun exposure, wash exposed skin and seek medical treatment for symptoms



Prevent Backing Accidents



Backing accidents occur when a vehicle strikes a person or object when driving in reverse. These incidents occur for many reasons:

- A person or object is in the driver's blind spot
- Background noise prevents pedestrians from hearing backup alarms
- A person is riding on the back of a vehicle, falls off and gets backed over

Many solutions exist to prevent backing incidents. For example:

- Drivers can use spotters to help them back their vehicles
- Video cameras with in-vehicle display monitors can give drivers a view of what is behind them
- Traffic control plans can prevent pedestrians and drivers from being in the same areas
- Training of pedestrians and drivers on blind spots and how to avoid them



Contact Us: For more information about your agency's safety program, please contact your safety coordinator. A current list is available at the following link: [Click here](#)