

Avoiding Back Injuries

Many agricultural employers report that back strains are the most common injury to their workers. It's impossible to measure the pain and inconvenience caused by back problems. But back injuries cost employer and employee dearly--in terms of time, money, and missed hours at work.

TRUE STORY

To hook up a disc to a wheel tractor, a tractor operator positioned his tractor hitch for hookup. At that point, he noticed that the tongue of the disc had fallen from its stand. He dismounted his tractor and went into the repair shop to find a lifting jack. When he couldn't find a jack, he grew frustrated and tried to lift the tongue manually onto its stand.

He grabbed the tongue firmly and lifted it. Disregarding proper lifting techniques, he suffered a serious back injury that required surgery. He lost many months of work and experienced many years of pain.

What could have prevented this accident?

- Use mechanical devices to assist in lifting heavy objects.
- Follow proper lifting techniques when lifting any object or materials.
- Ask for help.

Watch Your Back!

- Training in proper lifting techniques can help prevent painful and costly back injuries.
- Protecting your back at work and at home is your best insurance against back injuries.
- Lift the tongue with your legs, not your back, when attaching farm implements.
- Get help when moving heavy irrigation pipe or materials.
- Limit the weight of loads that you lift. Know your lifting capabilities.
- Use material handling equipment whenever possible.
- Never twist, extend, or reach when handling or carrying an object.
- Don't jump off equipment, especially after sitting for long periods of time.
- Exercise your back daily. Simple exercises will help keep your back strong, straight, and flexible.

EMPLOYER/EMPLOYEE RESPONSIBILITIES

Employer:

- Train employees periodically on proper lifting techniques.
- Develop procedures when handling and/or moving materials.
- Provide necessary material handling equipment and devices.
- Analyze procedures that require repetitive lifting and bending.

Employee:

- Lift with your legs, not your back. Always use proper lifting techniques.
- Limit the weight of loads so that you don't exceed your lifting capacity. Ask for help.
- Use mechanical handling equipment.
- Suggest ways to make your jobsite and work activities safe for your back.

Zenith provides workplace safety resources at: **TheZenith.com**[®]