



Tailgate Safety Talk

Information You Can Use to Prevent Accidents & Injuries

There's a lot of information available about the right way to lift and carry objects and how to avoid hurting your back. But, have you ever considered what happens to your back when you drive a truck or operate heavy equipment?

WHAT'S THE PROBLEM?

Anyone who drives a truck or operates heavy equipment for long periods of time has probably experienced neck, back, and shoulder pain. Long stretches of seat time flattens the natural curvature of the back and increases the pressure on the discs in the spine. Vibration caused by movement of the vehicle – bumps and turns – stimulates muscle activity in the spine and causes them to tire more easily.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

When you're driving, mowing, or operating heavy equipment, make sure to sit straight with your hips as far back against the back of your seat as possible. This provides maximum driving comfort for most people. At the same time, keep the driver's seat at a comfortable distance from the steering wheel. You want to eliminate the strain that often comes from reaching out too far for the wheel. Leaning forward causes a great deal of disc pressure while leaning back reduces the pressure.

It's important to support the natural curve of your spine to avoid undue fatigue when driving for long shifts. Always sit up straight while keeping gas, brake and clutch pedals within a comfortable reach. Adjust the rearview and outside mirrors for neck comfort. Reset the seat back position occasionally and use support behind your low back for comfort if needed. Changing your position every few minutes and stopping to walk around and check your equipment can help relieve the stress placed on your spine.

A FEW EVERYDAY TIPS TO GENERALLY AVOID BACK INJURIES:

- Pace yourself. Take small breaks between lifts in you are lifting a moving a number of things.
- Don't overdo it – don't try to lift something too heavy for you. If you have to strain to carry the load, it's too heavy.
- Make sure you have enough room to lift safely. Clear a space around the object before lifting it.
- Look around before you lift and look around as you carry. Make sure you can see where you are walking. Know where you are going to put down the load.
- Avoid walking on slippery, uneven surfaces while carrying something.
- Get help before you try to lift a heavy load. Use a dolly, front end loader, or forklift if you can.

Users of this tailgate talk are advised to determine the suitability of the information as it applies to local situations and work practices and its conformance with applicable laws and regulations.