

About 300 claims are accepted each year in Yukon workplaces for injuries caused by overexertion. Many of these injuries are a result of unsafe lifting practices. These injuries are caused when someone exerts themselves beyond their abilities or doesn't do a task in an appropriate manner while lifting, pulling, pushing, throwing or carrying. Overexertion can cause strains or tearing in muscles or tendons; and sprains or tearing in ligaments. The majority of overexertion injury claims affect workers' backs. Hazards that cause overexertion can be found in all workplaces.

What's the hazard?

A hazard is something that may expose a person to a risk of injury. Overexertion happens when someone lifts, pulls, pushes, throws or carries more than they are able or doesn't do a task in an appropriate manner.

Below are examples of hazards that often contribute to overexertion. Which of these examples could happen in your workplace? Are there any others that may be relevant in your workplace?

Examples of hazards that could contribute to overexertion include:

- lifting heavy boxes
- shovelling heavy snow
- hoisting or pulling objects
- reaching while lifting
- pushing or pulling rocks
- carrying heavy lumber

What can be done to prevent overexertion in the workplace?

Although overexertion injuries occur frequently, they are often preventable workplace incidents. Effective hazard identification, risk assessment, hazard controls, training and supervision help prevent most overexertion injuries.

Required by law:

- employers must do hazard assessments and identify any hazards in their workplaces, including overexertion hazards
- employers must have safe work procedures for identified hazards that cannot be eliminated
- employers must offer training to employees on safe work procedures and supervise workers to ensure they do tasks as they were trained
- employers must have procedures for reporting, investigating, and documenting incidents and injuries, and offer training to employees on those procedures

Additional measures:

- stretch before lifting, pulling, pushing, throwing or carrying
- wear appropriate footwear
- make sure your path is free of obstacles
- know your personal limits
- consider dividing objects into smaller loads
- spread your feet shoulder-width apart
- stand close to the object

Talk leader instructions:

- This is background information ONLY.
- Be sure to customize to your organization.
- Consider printing copies of this sheet for yourself and each participant.
- Lead a discussion with your workers about the materials on this sheet.
- Be sure to give real life examples whenever possible. Be open to questions.
- Conclude with a brief review of the main points or a summary based on the discussion.
- Fill in the name of your organization, location and the date on your sheet. Have each worker sign your sheet to confirm their attendance.
- File your sheet in your worker records to document the Safety Talk.

- bend your knees and keep your back straight
- lift as smoothly as possible
- carry the load between shoulder and knee height
- try storing materials at waist height
- ask for help if objects are too heavy
- rest to recover strength between long lifts
- consider using a mechanical lift like a dolly

Discussion questions:

1. How does your workplace assess overexertion hazards?
2. What actions can you take to prevent injuries caused by overexertion in your workplace?

More information:

If you have questions about preventing overexertion in your workplace, please contact:

- Workers' Safety and Compensation Board, 867-667-5450 or 1-800-661-0443 or worksafe@gov.yk.ca

Disclaimer

This resource has been prepared to help workplaces understand and comply with workplace health and safety laws. It is not legal advice and is not intended to replace the *Workers' Safety and Compensation Act*, S.Y. 2021, c.11 and *Workplace Health and Safety Regulations*.

Safety Talk record:

Print and complete this page or fill in electronically, then save as a record of your Safety Talk.

Comments/suggestions

Organization name

Safety Talk leader

Date

Safety Talk participants

print name

signature
