

# TOOLBOX TALK: Ergonomics

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**Speaker:** Safety Manager/Foreman

**Audience:** Workers

## I. Introduction

1 min

Ergonomics prevents injury and pain and helps you work better. The goal for today's discussion is to:

1. Provide strategies to prevent overexertion injuries

## II. Discussion Questions

5 min

- After a hard day's work on-site, where on your body do you feel the most pain?
- What are some of the tasks you do that put a strain on your body?
- What is it about those tasks that cause you to overexert yourself (e.g., awkward postures, repetitive motions, lifting)?

## III. Overexertion Hazards

7 min

The small changes you make now will make a big difference in reducing your risk for injuries later. There are three main categories of work practices where overexertion is most likely to occur:

1. Moving materials around the site
2. Working over your head
3. Working on the ground

Think about these different kinds of work. How could you modify these tasks to lessen their burden on your body?

1. **Manual materials handling** – This includes lifting, carrying, holding, pushing, or pulling heavy or bulky materials. It can stress your back and shoulders if you are carrying heavy and bulky items for long distances, are stooping to lift items, or are carrying them over your shoulders.

- Carry objects between shoulders and knees (“strike zone”)
  - Use rolling carts or dollies whenever possible; use hand grips for carrying heavy objects
  - Use 2 people to carry heavy objects (usually greater than 50 pounds)
  - If possible, store materials at a convenient height off of the ground and closer to your strike zone
2. **Overhead work** – When doing tasks like drilling, driving fasteners, and finishing drywall, you can stress your neck and shoulders.
- Use drill and screw gun extensions that let you hold the tool at waist or shoulder level rather than above your head
  - Use a lift/ladder/scaffolding/baker staging to move closer to the work
  - Limit the time you spend doing overhead work without breaks
3. **Groundwork** – such as installing and finishing floors, requires you to bend, stoop, kneel, and squat, often for long periods of time, and can cause stress on your body. Who in here does this work—and how does it affect your body?
- When possible, raise the work to your strike zone
  - When possible, use tools with extension handles that let you stand when doing a floor level task
  - Use knee pads
  - Take breaks and/or rotate jobs

By modifying how you do these tasks, you’ll be doing a lot to prevent pain and injury that could last much longer than the task you’re working on.

#### IV. Conclusion

1 min

If you have any questions about what we discussed today, please reach out to the safety manager or your foreman.

Are there any questions?

Thanks for your time!