



Drilling Down on NJPHA-JIF Strain Injuries

Background: Strains of various types typically account for half of the claims and loss costs sustained by NJPHA-JIF members, of loss costs. In this first of the Drilling Down reports, we will look more closely at these injuries.

Since 2010:

- Strains occurred most frequently in January; 31% occurred January/February/March
- Most strains are not reported on Monday, as you might suspect; 27% were reported on Wednesday.
- Lower back strains were most frequent (22%), followed by knee (16%) and shoulder (11%).
- At least 14 injuries occurred while handling garbage bags and cans.

To reduce injuries due to compactor bags:

- Assure that compactor bags shut off after a safe amount of fill.
- Request trash haulers provide dumpsters with side doors so that the load does not have to be thrown over the top.
- Encourage employees to work together on trash bags, using two person lifts where possible.
- Make sure employees try to use good lifting techniques as much as possible – give load an initial test to determine how heavy it is, lift with legs as much as possible, avoiding jerking the load or twisting the body while lifting.

Injuries due to repetitive jobs require the employee to take periodic breaks and avoid maintaining a static position for more than 10-15 minutes. Get up and stretch periodically!

Moving heavy equipment, lawnmowers, appliances (especially refrigerators and air conditioners), and snowblowers should be done with ramps and by multiple employees. Lifting aids should be used wherever possible. Contact the safety director for ideas on applicable devices.

Avoid lifts that require lifting above shoulder height, or below the knees; look for opportunities to stack heavy materials on the middle of shelving.

Employees who have had prior back injuries are more susceptible to injury; if possible, get extra assistance if the worker has had back problems before.

While training is not always the answer, supervision should observe workers to determine if they are lifting improperly; if education is required, contact the safety director, or check the MLSI schedule for back training in your area.

If you have questions, please contact your Risk Management Consultant, or Jim Rhoads, NJPHA-JIF Safety Director, 610-937-2694, or e-mail james_rhoads@pmagroup.com

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