

# LOSS CONTROL TOOL CHEST

## Maximum Lift Policy

### What is a maximum lift policy? Why do you need one?

A maximum lift policy is a policy statement issued and enforced by top management providing guidelines and instructions for lifting in the workplace.

Having this policy reinforces the importance of proper lifting in the workplace and holds employees accountable for lifting no more than the maximum amount specified.

### Key Components

A key component of the Maximum Lift Policy is the proper lifting method:

- Lift with your legs, not your back;
- Hold the load close;
- Avoid twisting while lifting, use your feet.

### Setting Policy

Your company can set the maximum lift amount at a weight you think is safe for your employees to lift. NIOSH (National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health) recommends a maximum lift of 50 lbs., which is standard in industry. You can always set it for a lower amount but it's not recommended you set a higher weight limit. Encourage your employees to know and respect their individual lifting limitations.

If employees can lift only a maximum weight, you must determine how they will handle weights over the maximum. They should be able to utilize mechanical means including carts, dollies, pallet jacks, forklifts, hoists, etc. Team lifts are also a possibility.

You might also need to help them determine the weight of items. Most of us don't know what 50 lbs. feels like and looks can often be deceiving. You may have to weigh items to make this determination. This could make an eye-opening training meeting.

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## **Cal/OSHA publications:**

Ergonomic Guide to Manual Material Handling

[http://www.dir.ca.gov/dosh/dosh\\_publications/mmh.pdf](http://www.dir.ca.gov/dosh/dosh_publications/mmh.pdf)

Lifting safer Poster (Spanish/English)

[http://www.dir.ca.gov/dosh/dosh\\_publications/liftingSafer.pdf](http://www.dir.ca.gov/dosh/dosh_publications/liftingSafer.pdf)

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## **Sample Policy**

We have included a sample policy as a place for you to start developing your own Maximum Lift Policy.

### **Sample Lift Policy**

#### **Company Name**

By working together we can prevent back injuries. Keeping your back healthy and keeping you on the job requires a team effort. Management is committed to helping reduce back injuries at work by teaching good lifting and material handling techniques. Back safety is a shared responsibility -- it requires your cooperation at work, home and play.

Maximum Lift for an employee:

It is the policy of (employer's name) that employees are not to lift more than 50/40/30/20 (or other amount) pounds by themselves. This does not mean you are required to lift this much weight, but you are not to lift more than this amount.

Safe lifting means keeping your back aligned while you lift, maintaining your center of balance and letting the strong muscles in your legs do the actual lifting. By using the following techniques, you can learn how to lift safely and save your back from accidental strain and injury:

- Do a few warm up lifting exercises to prepare your back muscles for heavier loads.
- Know how heavy something is before you try to lift it; get help if there is even a REMOTE possibility that the lift will put a strain on your back.
- If the item is too heavy or bulky, use mechanical help and/or team lifting.
- Lift everything twice! First, lift the load mentally. Plan every step before you do it physically. Do you know where you are taking this item? Is the pathway clear? Are there any doors that need to be opened prior to carrying?
- Tuck you pelvis and tighten your stomach muscles to keep your back aligned. Keep your feet shoulder width apart and slightly staggered.

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- Bend your knees not your waist. Let your legs do the lifting. This helps protect your back while lifting.
- Hug the load and keep it as close to you as possible. Be sure to grasp the load at opposite corners.
- Avoid twisting by pointing your feet, knees and chest in the same direction. Lift the object and then turn your whole body using your feet.
- Watch your footing.
- Keep your eyes open and on the pathway.
- Set the object down like you picked it up.

If something that needs to be moved or lifted and it weighs over the maximum lift amount it should be moved using carts, dollies, pallet jacks, forklifts, hoists, or team lifts (choose those in your workplace.)

If you are not sure of the weight of the object you're lifting, and you think it might be too heavy for you, get someone to help or move it by mechanical means.