

# RTC SAFETY BULLETIN



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## ERGONOMICS: LIFTING AWKWARD LOADS

**Standard Lifting:** Most people are familiar with the “standard” lift—bend your knees, hug the load, and let your stronger leg muscles do the actual lifting—placing a minimum stress on the lower back. This standard way of lifting is safe, but in some situations impractical. When the load you have to lift is awkward, or is in a hard-to-reach area, the standard lift can be difficult to perform. The following tips can help you lift safely in situations where the standard lift can't be used.

**Odd-sized Loads:** Long objects that are relatively light can be awkward to lift and carry. When lifting and carrying pipes, lumber, or other long, light loads don't “hug” the load close to your body. Instead, support it on your shoulder, keeping the front end of the object higher than the rear. If the load is long or heavy enough to require two people, each of you should shoulder it on the same side and keep the object level (Be sure to keep in step while walking). Stretching your muscles before the lift reduces the risk of muscle strain.

**Overhead loads** are difficult to lift. If you have to lift an object that's above shoulder-level, use a stepstool or ladder to avoid over-reaching. Test the weight of the load before removing it from its shelf. If it's less than 25 pounds or so, slide it toward you, and hug it close to your body as you descend. If possible, hand it down to a waiting coworker.

**Reaching into** a bin, container, or other storage area to lift an object makes the standard lift next to impossible. In these situations, stand with feet at shoulder distance apart, slightly bend your knees, and start to squat, bending at your hip joints, not at your waist (The same movement you make when you lower yourself into a chair). Slide the load as close to your body as you can and raise yourself using your leg and hip muscles. Tighten your abdominal muscles as you lift, and if possible, rest your knees against the side of the container for additional support.

### SAFETY QUICK NOTES:

Eye wash stations: have you completed your weekly check and recorded this?