

Work Smarter



Use backboards, stair chairs and stretchers correctly.

Photos courtesy of Phoenix Fire Department.

Follow these tips to improve your safety and fitness on the job.

Reduce your risk of injury while lifting, bending and carrying. The following devices, used correctly, will help you lift safely and avoid injury.

Backboards

- Backboards are sometimes used to prevent further spinal injury.
- Maintain neutral spine during all backboard activity.

- Do not lift any higher than necessary; avoid excessive shoulder shrug and elbow flexion.
- Use eye contact and verbal communication with lifting partners.

Stair chairs

- Stair chairs are appropriate for narrow stairways and small landings.
- Teach personnel about storage location and use. They may not be used as often as stretchers/gurneys and backboards for transfers.
- Use correct lifting techniques, maintain neutral spine, and hinge at the hips.
- Pivot or move feet to change direction rather than twisting.

- Keep hips, knees and ankles aligned and facing the same direction during lift and carry.
- Keep tool or equipment as close to the body as possible.
- Keep chest wide and open to prevent shoulder impingement.
- Maintain neutral wrist.
- Stop to adjust if necessary.

Stretchers

- Make sure all personnel are familiar with stretcher operations.
- Maintain neutral spine and use proper lifting and bending techniques during all stretcher activity.

- Use the power grip, underhanded position.
- Keep stretcher on hips and close to body.
- Keep upper arms and forearms close to the body to reduce compressive forces on the back.

Download or order your free copy* of the U.S. Fire Administration's "Emergency Services Ergonomics and Wellness" handbook to learn more corrective measures to help increase the safety of emergency responders, reduce the costs of worker's compensation claims, maximize the longevity of emergency service careers, and assist with sending personnel into healthy retirements.

*Quantity restrictions apply.



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