

BACK PROTECTION PROGRAM

Program Element [R2-10-207\(10\)\(f\)](#)

Each agency loss prevention committee or individuals designated by the agency head shall develop, implement, and monitor a back injury prevention program (as applicable to their agency).

Each agency shall evaluate their workplace for potential tasks that may cause back injuries and take action to minimize or reduce the exposure. One way to reduce back injuries is to implement an ergonomics program that focuses on redesigning the work environment and work tasks to reduce hazards that place strain on the body.

The Liberty Mutual Workplace Safety Index identifies overexertion injuries as the leading cause of disabling injury. These injuries result from lifting, pushing, pulling, holding, carrying, or throwing ([Liberty Mutual, 2022](#)). State of Arizona employee lifting or material handling injuries are one of the most common injury types and accounted for 1,680 claims and cost the State \$9.52 million in workers' compensation costs (2018-2022). These statistics illustrate the importance of a back injury prevention program.

Definition:	A back injury prevention program focuses on tasks that involve interaction of the back and upper extremities to lift, push, pull, hold, carry, or throw material, equipment, or tools.
Why do I need this program?	For agencies that experience a high number of sprains and strains, a back injury prevention program is primary to identifying injury causes and preventing future back claims. The objective is to identify the tasks that most frequently cause injury and then develop controls for prevention. Back injuries are costly to both the agency and employee. The 2018 Bureau of Labor and Statistics (BLS) data reports 11 median days away from work for sprains, strains, and tears.
How do I know if a back protection program applies to my agency and my specific job hazards?	To determine if a program is needed, ask the following questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Do any job functions require lifting, pushing, pulling, carrying and/or moving objects?• Do any of your facilities own or use material handling equipment? e.g. carts, dollies, tugs, forklifts, pallet jacks, hoists, cranes, etc.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Do your workers' compensation claims show a back injury exposure? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Look for back and upper extremity injury trends in your agency by reviewing the last few years of claims and the OSHA 300 log. ○ Focus on tasks that involve lifting, pushing, pulling, or carrying.
<p>What are the best practices for a back protection program?</p>	<p>The program includes management support, involving employees, identifying problems, providing training, implementing solutions and evaluating progress.</p> <p>Prioritize tasks that will need analysis by reviewing claims and accident logs. High frequency and claim costs will assist in prioritizing.</p> <p>Observe work activities, talk with workers, and identify the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Risk factors including awkward posture, repetitive motion, forceful exertions, contact stress, and static postures ● Worker fatigue and discomfort ● Pain behavior such as self-restricting movements and massaging back and shoulders ● Record work tasks for later review and for evidence of recognized musculoskeletal hazards <p>Use assessment tools to evaluate the task and assess acceptable weight limits. Consider the following assessment methods:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ergonomic Guidelines for Manual Material Handling ● Job Safety Analysis ● NIOSH Lifting Equation App ● Manual Materials Handling Liberty Mutual Manual Materials Handling Tables <p>Implement controls to eliminate, reduce, or control or hazards including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Engineering Controls: Eliminate or reduce the risk factors through process modifications or redesign. e.g. mechanical lifting aids.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Administrative Controls: Alternate tasks, provide a variety of tasks, or modify work practices to reduce overuse of the same muscle groups. <p>Provide training for all new employees, and any time there are changes to processes or any redesign of work stations. Training should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● General principles of ergonomics ● Proper lifting and carrying techniques ● Recognition of hazards and injuries ● Job specific training should be given on safe work practices, hazards, and controls <p>Evaluate Progress: Periodically assess the effectiveness of the ergonomic process to ensure its continuous improvement and long-term success.</p>
<p>Are there any mandatory training best practices that must be developed by the agency?</p>	<p>Training best practices should include both classroom training and hands-on practice with new tools, equipment, or work practices to make sure employees have the skills necessary to work safely.</p> <p>Use adult learning principles including hands on practice, several types of visual aids, problem solving sessions, and provide ample time for questions.</p> <p>Specific job training should include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Principles of ergonomics and their applications ● Agency job specific safe work practices ● Industry specific guidelines from OSHA eTools, NIOSH publications, and industry standards. For example, use safe patient handling guidelines from the Veterans Administration or safe lifting wire spools from the Electrical Contractors' OSHA eTool ● Proper use of equipment, tools, and machine controls ● Good work practices, such as proper material handling methods, and workstation adjustments ● Awareness of work tasks that may lead to pain or injury ● Recognition of risk factors and early symptoms of Musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) ● Reporting and addressing early indications of MSDs before serious injury develops

	<p>Available Training:</p> <p>The following lists some of several ergonomic and lifting/carrying related courses available through the State's learning management system, TraCorp (hint: search using the keyword "back").</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● ADRISKCPMH, Child's Play in the Office - Manual Handling ● ADRISKSMH, Safe Manual Handling ● ADRISKLIFT, Principles of Safe Lifting and Carrying ● ERGO102, Office Ergonomics: Adjust Your Chair <p>Safety awareness flyer - How to Avoid Bodily Injury While Lifting.</p>
<p>Are there specific requirements for documenting the program, training, etc...?</p>	<p>Training records should be maintained and include the following information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Date ● Attendee ● Instructor ● Hands-on and theoretical topics ● Time spent in training
<p>Are there any resources available that can assist me in putting together a back protection safety plan?</p>	<p>Refer to the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Sample Agency Back Protection Program ● Ergonomics Program Element to assist with putting together an Ergonomics program. ● OSHA Technical Manual (OTM) - Section VII: Chapter 1 Occupational Safety and Health Administration ● Workplace Safety and Health Topics: Ergonomics and Musculoskeletal Disorders NIOSH CDC ● Injuries, Illnesses, and Fatalities: IIF Home : U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics ● Workplace Safety Indices by Industry: Liberty Mutual Business Insurance <p>For additional assistance contact State Risk Management, Loss Prevention at rndlossprevention@azdoa.gov.</p>