

Handling Patients Safely Fatality File



Tove Schuster raced to help a fellow nurse lift a patient at Crozer-Chester Medical Center near Philadelphia.

While working the overnight shift, she heard an all-too-common cry: “Please, I need help. My patient has fallen on the floor.”

The patient was a woman who weighed more than 300 pounds. So, Schuster did what nursing schools and hospitals across the country teach: She gathered a few colleagues, and they lifted the patient as a team.

“I had her legs – a corner of one of the legs, anyway,” says Schuster, who was 43 years old at the time. “And as we swung her up onto the bed, I felt something pop. And I went ‘ooo.’ ”

She finished the shift in pain and drove straight home to bed.

But after Schuster woke up late that afternoon, her husband, Matt, heard her shouting. He says he ran to the bedroom and found her crawling across the floor. “I thought it was a joke at first,” he says. “And she says, ‘I can’t walk.’ ”