Moving Materials Pain-free

Safety Talk

Construction workers carry materials of all shapes and sizes. Here’s how to haul them without hurting yourself or others.

Boxes and cartons

The best way to carry boxes and cartons is to grip them at opposite top and bottom corners. Carry sacked materials the same way, and against your waist if possible. Don’t strain yourself by placing loads on your shoulder, not even for short trips.

Barrels and drums

Roll these, if you haven’t received training to carry them safely. Drums are easier to roll than barrels, since barrel bilges make the roll unstable. But that bilge helps with tipping, making barrels easier to up-end than drums.

Up-ending a full drum is a two-person job, with each person facing the other. Hold the lower chime – edge or rim – securely, to keep the drum stable as the weight shifts.

When rolling a drum down a ramp, don’t let it overtake you. Use a rope sling and inclined planes when loading or unloading drums.

Sheet metal and glass

A sharp metal edge or burr can slice like a razor. Use leather gloves, hand leathers or gloves with metal inserts when handling sheet metal.

When carrying glass, wear leather gloves or hand leathers, protect your wrists and forearms, and wear a full-length apron made of leather or heavy canvas.

Long objects

If the load is too heavy for one person, call a buddy who’s close to your size. Two workers carrying long sections of pipe or lumber should carry on the same shoulder and walk in step. When a long slender object is too awkward for two people to carry, and is not too heavy for one, then the other person should act as lookout. Carry the front end higher than the back end, and especially watch out when approaching corners.

Irregular shapes

With irregular shapes, the most important concern is the shift in the center of

gravity, especially when you start to lift. Spend extra time surveying the load before you pick it up.

Examine every load first. Look it over carefully so you can place your hands where they’ll be clear of sharp edges and corners, slivers, ends of binding straps, nails or other hazards.

Know where the item is to be placed, and make sure the area is clear so you can set the load down right away, instead of holding it while you clear a spot with your feet.