Older Worker Safety: Experience Counts—So Do the Risks Meeting Kit



WHAT’S AT STAKE

Older workers bring experience, good judgment and strong problem-solving skills but age also brings physical changes that increase risk on the job. Tasks that involve heavy lifting, fast reactions, awkward positions or long hours can strain joints, slow movement or cause fatigue more quickly than expected. Even highly experienced workers can face new challenges if the job demands haven’t changed but their bodies have.

WHAT’S THE DANGER

Older workers bring experience, but the body changes with time, and that can make certain tasks riskier even when the work feels familiar. Reaction time may slow, joints may stiffen and fatigue can set in faster, which means hazards that were once easy to avoid can now cause injuries much more quickly.

Injuries become more severe and harder to recover from

As the body ages, muscles, tendons and joints do not bounce back the way they used to. A small slip or awkward lift can lead to strains, sprains or long recovery times. Even minor falls or overexertion can have a bigger impact because healing takes longer.

Where risk shows up most often

- Tasks that require bending, climbing, pushing or pulling
- Slippery or uneven surfaces that challenge balance
- Heavy or awkward loads that strain shoulders and lower backs
- Fast moving work environments that require quick reactions
- Repetitive tasks that cause soreness to build through the day
- Working alone without quick access to help if something goes wrong

Fatigue and physical limits increase the chance of mistakes

Older workers often push through discomfort because they are experienced and confident. But ignoring stiffness, soreness or early fatigue can lead to missteps, slower reactions or poor posture, which all increase the chance of strains, slips or overexertion injuries.

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

Staying safe as an older worker is about using your experience wisely while giving your body the support it needs. A few smart habits can reduce strain, prevent slips and help you stay steady and confident on the job.

Smart habits that keep you safer

- Warm up your muscles at the start of the shift, especially before lifting or climbing
- Use carts, lifts or mechanical aids instead of carrying heavy or awkward items
- Wear slips resistant, supportive footwear to reduce joint stress
- Adjust your posture by keeping loads close and avoiding twisting
- Take brief pauses to stretch tight muscles or reset your position
- Switch tasks when repetition starts to cause discomfort
- Ask for a second set of hands before a lift feels too heavy or unstable

Pay attention to what your body tells you

Your body gives early hints long before an injury happens. If you notice stiffness, slower reactions, soreness or quick fatigue, adjust your pace or reposition before continuing. These small changes help you stay ahead of strain rather than reacting after it becomes painful.

Set yourself up for success

Good lighting, clear walk paths and well-organized work areas make every task easier. Using handrails, planning your movements and communicating with your team about challenging tasks ensures you stay safe without rushing or taking shortcuts.

FINAL WORD

Experience is one of your greatest strengths, but listening to your body is just as important. Small adjustments and smart habits keep older workers steady, confident and injury free. Staying safe is not about slowing down, it is about working in a way that keeps you strong for the long run.