BACK PROTECTION PROGRAM

Program Element
R2-10-207(11)(f)

Each agency loss prevention committee or individuals designated by the agency head, shall develop, implement, and monitor a back injury prevention program.

Each agency shall evaluate their workplace for potential tasks that may cause back injuries and take action to minimize or reduce the exposure. The most effective way to prevent back injury is to implement an ergonomics program that focuses on redesigning the work environment and work tasks to reduce the hazards of injury trends.

Bureau of Labor Statistics reports for 2013, that sprains and strains have the highest incidence rate (involving days away from work) of 40 for all industries, and a state government rate of 63.9. These rates are the highest of all nature of injury classifications for all occupational injuries and illnesses involving days away from work.

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, and cost US businesses $14.2 billion in direct costs, and accounted for more than one quarter of the overall national workers' compensation burden (Liberty Mutual, 2013). These statistics illustrate the importance of a back injury prevention program.

Definition:	A back injury prevention program focusses on tasks that involve interaction of the back and upper extremities to lift, push, pull, hold, carry, or throw material, equipment, or tools. The program elements include management support, involving employees, identifying problems, providing training, implementing solutions and evaluating progress. (OSHA Safety and Health Topics: Ergonomics)
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 the injury and then develop controls for prevention. Back injuries are costly to both the agency and employee. The 2013 BLS data reports 10 median days away from work for sprains and strains.

How do I know if a back injury program applies to my agency and my specific job hazards?	To determine if a program is needed, 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 in on tasks that involve lifting, pushing, pulling, or carrying and determine the frequency and severity. High frequency and claim costs will assist in prioritizing tasks needing analysis and control implementation.
What are the best practices for a Back Injury Prevention program?	Prioritize tasks that will need analysis by reviewing claims and accident logs. Observe work activities, talk with workers, and identify the following: • 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 Use assessment tools to evaluate the task and assess acceptable weight limits. Consider the following assessment methods: • NIOSH checklists • Job Safety analysis • NIOSH Lifting Equation • Snook's Psychophysical Tables • American Conference of Governmental Industrial Hygienists (ACGIH) Threshold Limit Values (TLVs) for Manual Lifting Implement controls to reduce, control or eliminate hazards including: • Engineering Controls: Eliminate or reduce the risk factors through process modifications or redesign. • Administrative Controls: Alternate tasks, provide a variety of tasks, or modify work practices to reduce overuse of the same muscle groups.

	Provide training for new employees and process changes and redesign. Training should include: • General principles of ergonomics • Recognition of hazards and injuries • Job specific training should be given on safe work practices, hazards, and controls **Evaluate Progress**: Periodically assess the effectiveness of the ergonomic process to ensure its continuous improvement and long-term success.
Are there any mandatory training best practices that must be developed by the agency?	Training best practices should include both classroom training and hands on practice with new tools, equipment, or work practices to make sure they have the skills necessary to work safely. Use adult learning principles including hands on practice, several types of visual aids, problem solving sessions, and provide ample time for questions. Specific job training should include the following: • 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 VA 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, tool selection and use, 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

Are there specific requirements for documenting the program, training, etc…?	Training records should be maintained and include the following information: • Date • Attendee • Instructor • Hands-on and theoretical topics • Time spent in training • Updates
Are there any resources available that can assist me in putting together a back injury protection safety plan?	Refer to the following: • Bureau of Labor Statistics. Table 5. Number, incidence rate, and median days away from work for nonfatal occupational injuries and illnesses involving days away from work by injury or illness characteristics and ownership, 2013: http://www.bls.gov/news.release/osh2.t05.htm • OSHA Safety and Health Topics: Ergonomics: https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/ergonomics/index.html • OSHA Ergonomics eTools: https://www.osha.gov/dts/osta/oshasoft/index.html • OSHA Compliance Manual: OSHA Technical Manual (OTM) Section VII: Chapter 1: https://www.osha.gov/dts/osta/otm/otm_vii/otm_vii_1.html • 2014 Liberty Mutual, Workplace Safety Index: file:///C:/Users/117122/Downloads/WSI%202014%20(1).pdf • NIOSH Workplace Safety and Health Topics: Ergonomics and Musculoskeletal Disorders: http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/ergonomics/#guide