

For Your Safety: Lifting Awkward Loads

There are many things in the scrap yard that can be difficult to lift because of their shape. From tires, to cardboard, to balls of wire, some things are just hard to handle. Lifting awkward loads causes many injuries, mostly when the carrier loses his or her balance or can't see around what is being carried. Bulky loads don't have to weigh much to hurt you. Trying to pick up something taller or wider than you are may force your body into an awkward posture that is tough on the muscles and joints. Thinking about what you are planning before you do it is the best way to prevent an injury.

Think

Think of better ways to move awkward material. Use carts, dollies or material handlers to lift loads that are too big or bulky to get your arms around. If you have to carry it, think about where you are going. Make sure pathways are clear and doorways are open before you leave on your trip. Think about when you get there. Have place to put the material down with hurting yourself.

Overhead Loads

Before you pull something down from a top shelf, do the following:

- Use a step stool or ladder to avoid overreaching.
- Test the weight, then slide the object toward you and hug it close as you descend.
- If possible, hand it to a coworker before descending the ladder or stool.
- Make sure to wear your safety glasses as dust and dirt can easily get in your eye.

Long Material

Have a plan in place before picking up long awkward loads:

- Carry long, light objects such as pipes on your shoulder
- Get a helper for long heavy loads. Each of you should shoulder it on the same side.
- If the load blocks your vision, get help.

Watch your posture

Your body has the most power when it is in what is called a neutral posture. This simply means your knees; hips and shoulders are aligned and facing the same way. As you start to twist and bend you start losing power and you increase the risk for injury. Always keep this in mind when lifting awkward loads. If you can't lift it safely, find a better way.