



Risk Control | Canada

Getting Material Off the Floor

When you are walking through your operations, whether they involve manufacturing, assembly, warehouse or construction, observe your employees bending to pick up material or products off the ground or floor. You see the employees bending, but have you really considered how frequently it occurs?

We call this the “forest for the trees syndrome.” Because it’s common in many operations for employees to repeatedly bend over each day, this behavior has become accepted and is not seen as an efficiency or musculoskeletal disorder risk factor issue.

A simple exercise will dramatically put this into perspective. Walk through your operations with a notepad and write down everything you see on the floor or ground, in every department or area. You may be surprised at the amount of materials, tools and product that end up on your list!

The Numbers

An employee who bends 100 times a day and works 250 days a year will bend 25,000 times a year. It is very important to understand the number of times an employee bends, and all foremen, supervisors and managers should be aware of this number.

It takes direct observation to really understand and see the bending that is occurring in the workplace. Observe the typical job task as it should be completed, count the number of times the employee bends in a day, and then extrapolate it for the year. This annualized number is very important as most managers see only one bend, but they do not think about how this projects out over a year.

Bending, lifting, lowering and carrying is associated with musculoskeletal disorders risk factors. But it’s also an efficiency issue, even if most operations managers don’t see recognize it as such. It takes approximately two to three seconds to bend, so bending 25,000 times a year would take an employee approximately 21 hours. So if you have 100 employees of that type, it would add up to over 2,100 hours a year of just bending.

The Percentages

We understand that all material, products and tools cannot be off of the floor or ground. However, what percentage of this material and products could be raised off the floor to reduce or eliminate the bending? Can you get five, 10 or 20 percent of the material off the floor?

These small changes can make a large difference when they are annualized over several years. Make small changes that can affect your operations quickly.



Solutions

You do not have to spend tens of thousands of dollars to get materials off the floor or ground. Three or four pallets can be strapped together as a base with the pallet of material then placed on top, raising it up and placing the employee in more neutral posture, reducing the bending to the floor to pick up material.

In addition, materials can be placed on tables or sawhorses, forklifts can raise material up to waist height, and a hoist can be used to lift material and position it to be worked on. Lift tables, spring activated tables and hydraulic lift tables can be used to keep the material and products between knuckle and shoulder height.

There are many ways to raise material off the ground. We have to see our operations through different glasses, identify opportunities in the workplace and make the necessary changes. Remember, having material on the floor or ground is an efficiency issue, along with the risk factors associated with bending. Making changes of this nature can affect your bottom line profit and reduce injuries at the same time.

For more information, contact your contact your broker or CNA Risk Control consultant, or visit [cnacanada.ca](https://www.cnacanada.ca) today.