

Setting up a hazard free job

includes team carrying strategies

Moving and Storage

Moving a household or business takes a lot of prep work and planning. Involving your entire work crew in finding hazards and preventing risk can go a long way in injury prevention.

Team lifting and carrying makes the task go quicker and safer, yet working in teams has its dangers, especially if the team does not work together on a regular basis.

Getting started: Hazard prevention at the job site

Addressing the hazards

Although there is generally no single solution that will eliminate all risk, there are things you can do to *minimize* risk. For example, rather than hand carrying a particular item or stack of boxes, use a furniture dolly or a hand truck.

Job site walkthrough as a team

At the work location, the crew lead should conduct a hazard prevention focused walkthrough of the site. In addition, each member of the crew should note any hazard that they may individually recognize. Although duplication is likely, this is one way to assure an item does not get overlooked. Plus, by participating in the walkthrough and sharing the hazards they observe, the crew takes ownership of the process.

It is likely that as the job progresses, hazards may arise that were not there at the start. Each crew member should be encouraged to bring up any new hazard that they recognize.

Hazard identification and prevention

List each potential hazard on the Hazard Assessment Sheet* for the job site. Next to each hazard, list how it will be corrected or addressed. Three possible methods or a combination may be used to reduce the exposure to the hazard:

1. Physically remove the risk, such as the use of walk boards or decking boards across soft grassy ground.



*A sample is provided on the last page.

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2. Use a visual cue such as a colored flag tied around a stair banister at the second or third step from each end of the stair flight or a flag or tape stripe on the wall where a hallway makes a turn so that the crew member carrying the goods backward has a visual reminder of an upcoming hazard.
3. Give verbal warnings to start, stop, set down, turn or to be aware of other hazards.

Regardless of which method is used, the intent is to identify the hazard and employ an effective way to address the hazard so that it has the least amount of risk.

Keep a written record of successful methods of addressing hazards from past jobs to use for similar situations as they come along. This can be used as a training aid for new employees.

Things to consider when setting up teams

- **Communication styles and experience:** Remind workers to tell their partners of their plan before they do it.
- **Physical size:** Teams whose height differs by eight to ten inches will have differing length of reach, differing gait and differing ability to step up or down.

Communication

Injuries often occur due to lack of communication, especially when moving heavy or awkward objects. Sudden shifts in weight wreak havoc on backs, shoulders and other parts of the body.

Remind workers that communication is key to preventing injuries, especially when working with a new partner. Tell your partner your plan before you start. (Examples include: Lift on 3. I will go first. Tell me when I'm almost to that step. Tell me when to step up. Tell me if you need to set it down and rest.)



HAZARD: Unequal teams and physical differences

Something to consider is the difference in walking stride of the team members. If there is a significant difference in height between the two, there is most likely a difference in stride length. This difference in stride can make each person involved alter their cadence and can lead to a possible stumble when compensating.

SOLUTION: Addressing physical differences

If you find yourself matched with a crew member who is physically opposite, careful planning of the moves will go far in minimizing the risk of an incident. Determining which of you will be going up or down stairs and calling out hazards will be essential. Consider the route. Decide who should go first based on the terrain.

HAZARD: Inclines

An incline presents another set of problems when the weight and balance of an object shifts. The additional pitch caused by the physical difference between the team members will also affect the balance of the item carried and can make it unwieldy.

The type of surface for the incline must also be considered. Is the surface grass, pavement, or dirt?

SOLUTION: Inclines

Have the shorter person on the high side. Example: shorter person will back up the incline or up the stairs. Shorter person will be at top of the stairs or incline going down.

Use walk boards on slippery surfaces such as grass or mud. Check non-slip surface on walk boards for wear and replace as needed. Wear footwear with good traction.

HAZARD: Stairs

Addressing stair variability takes creativity. Narrow stairs can require you to change your hand-hold location from the outside corner to the inside edge to avoid scraping or pinching your hand



on any protrusions. The change in hand-hold position can affect your grip strength and length of time you can hold the grip.

The things to look out for on a flight of stairs include the degree to which the nose overhangs the tread below. The greater the overhang, the greater the chance that the toe box of the wearer's footwear will catch under the overhang and cause a stumble when ascending.

Carpeted stairs in a house may not have the nose overhang issue but can still present a hazard. The thickness of the carpet plus the pad can create a round bulge at the nose and create the illusion that the tread is deeper and firmer than it really is. Place a foot too close to the edge and the carpet and pad will give way and allow the foot to slip. Loss of balance by one of the team members affects the other team member.

Vinyl or plastic runners used to protect carpet may become slick.

SOLUTION: Stairs

Everyone on the team should traverse the area where work will be performed before actual moving begins. This allows each member of the team to be familiar with the type of stair covering, its traction and cushioning.

If plastic or vinyl runners become wet or slick, use an absorbent pad or rug for workers to dry their shoes. Make sure these have adequate backing so they don't slip and make the situation worse.

If throw rugs are loose or wrinkling, just remove them from the work area.

HAZARD: Visibility moving large items

Teams move large, bulky items that can also obstruct their view.

SOLUTION: Moving large items

Decide in advance who will go backwards and who will call out warnings such as turn ahead, step ahead, stop, start, 1,2,3, lift, etc.



It becomes the responsibility of the team member whose vision is not blocked to watch for hazards and call them out to the assisting team member. A third person may be needed to assist guiding the team if both movers have blocked views.

HAZARD: Job characteristics

A steep driveway, a broad expanse of lawn to traverse, or a rotten wood porch step are some real world examples.

SOLUTION: Addressing job characteristics

Plan for your work environment. Each surface has a different level of friction (pavement, grass, gravel, etc.) and combined with the type of footwear, the traction may vary and cause a slip and fall.

Get creative. In the instance of having an expanse of grass to traverse, has there been recent rain or watering that would make the ground soft and create unstable footing? Use additional walk boards laid out end to end and create a walk way over the soft ground. Or in the instance of a rotten wood porch, use an alternate entry that is more stable even if it increases your travel distance, or lay out some walk boards or decking boards to span the soft portion. The intent is to reduce or minimize the existing hazard without creating an additional or greater hazard.

Communicate early if you are losing your grip or if you need to shift the weight.

Hazard Assessment Sheet

Date: _____

Location: _____

Directions: Complete a review of the work site and document hazards and solutions.

Area		Hazard	Plan	Reviewed with Team	Implemented
Example	2 nd to 1 st floor stairs	TURN ON STAIRS: Seven steps down to landing, turn and seven more steps to 1 st floor.	Wrap cloth or tape around banister two steps from landing and again two steps from bottom of stair at 1 st floor.	✓	✓

Team Leader: _____