

MS – Toolbox Meeting Records			MRG-CF-TCR-07
Rev: 2.0	Next Rev Date: July 2028	Issue Date: July 2024	

Toolbox Talk No: 290

Issue:	Back Protection & Safe Manual Handling		
Location:	Via SMS Text Message, MRG Employee Portal	Date:	04/03/2026
Briefed by:	Via SMS and Portal	Time:	10.30

Points Raised and Comments

Purpose of this Toolbox Talk
 Back injuries are one of the most common workplace injuries in construction and rail works. This toolbox talk reinforces safe manual handling practices and back protection techniques to prevent strains, sprains, and long-term musculoskeletal injuries.

Why Back Protection is Critical in Rail Environments
 Rail works often involve:

- Lifting and handling heavy or awkward materials (sleepers, steel, formwork)
- Working on uneven ballast surfaces
- Repetitive tasks and prolonged bending
- Limited access requiring manual handling instead of mechanical aids

These conditions significantly increase the risk of back injuries and fatigue-related incidents.

Common Causes of Back Injuries

- Lifting loads that are too heavy
- Poor lifting technique (bending at the waist)
- Twisting while carrying loads
- Repetitive manual tasks without rest
- Sudden or jerky movements
- Not using mechanical aids when available

Hazards / Risks

- Muscle strains and ligament sprains
- Long-term spinal injuries
- Reduced mobility and time off work
- Increased risk of secondary incidents due to reduced capability

Mandatory Controls & Safe Work Practices

Plan the Lift

- Assess the load: weight, size, shape, and stability
- Identify the path—remove trip hazards and ensure clear access
- Decide if mechanical aids (trolleys, lifting equipment) can be used

Use Mechanical Aids

- Always use available lifting equipment where practicable
- Team lifts required for heavy or awkward loads

Correct Lifting Technique

- Stand close to the load with feet shoulder-width apart
- Bend knees, keep back straight, and engage core muscles
- Lift using your legs—not your back

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- Keep the load close to your body
- Avoid twisting—turn with your feet

During the Task

- Take regular breaks during repetitive work
- Do not rush—maintain control at all times
- Communicate clearly during team lifts

PPE Considerations

- Wear appropriate gloves for grip
- Ensure footwear provides stability on uneven ground

Rail-Specific Considerations

- Be mindful of uneven ballast affecting footing and stability
- Maintain awareness of rail corridor hazards while carrying loads
- Do not carry loads that obstruct your view near live rail or plant
- Ensure safe access/egress paths are maintained at all times

Supervisor Responsibilities

- Ensure manual handling risks are addressed in SWMS
- Provide appropriate equipment and lifting aids
- Monitor workers for unsafe lifting practices
- Rotate tasks to reduce fatigue and repetitive strain

Worker Responsibilities

- Follow safe lifting techniques at all times
- Ask for assistance when required—never lift beyond your capacity
- Use provided equipment and controls
- Report any discomfort or early signs of injury

Stop Work Authority

Stop work immediately if:

- The load is too heavy or unsafe to lift
- Mechanical aids are required but not available
- Ground conditions are unstable
- You feel strain or discomfort during lifting

Emergency Procedures

- If a back injury occurs, stop work immediately
- Do not continue working through pain
- Report to Supervisor and seek first aid
- Contact emergency services (000) if serious injury is suspected

Key Takeaways

- Think before you lift—plan every task
- Use your legs, not your back
- Avoid twisting and keep loads close
- Ask for help—team lifts prevent injuries
- Protect your back—it's essential for your long-term health