Is This How You Want Your Workers to Handle Materials?

What's wrong with this picture?



These paper rolls weigh about 3,000 pounds. Just imagine how much stress it puts on the worker's back, shoulders, arms and wrists to roll these monsters by hand—especially across a concrete, sloped floor that's pocked with holes and latticed with roll stand tracks! It's a musculoskeletal disorder (MSD) just waiting to happen.

The Moral: Heavy, bulky and irregularly shaped materials should be moved with the aid of mechanical devices across a surface that's smooth, level and even.

What MSDs Are

The things you do at work every day like lifting, moving or rolling big and bulky objects put a strain on your muscles, nerves, bones, joints, back, shoulders and limbs. If you work your body too hard or in the wrong way, you can cause serious damage resulting in painful injuries called MSDs.

Some MSDs are "traumatic"—that is, they happen in a single incident; many are "cumulative"—that is, they occur gradually as a result of repeated stress over a long time. Rolling 3,000 paper rolls the way the worker in this photo is a great way to suffer *either* a traumatic or cumulative MSD.

MSDs DON’T KILL YOU

They Just Ruin Your Life

MSD are more severe than normal work injuries because they can:

- Sneak up on you
- Cause you horrible pain that lasts your whole life
- Keep you from ever working again
- Make it impossible to do even simple everyday things you take for granted like walk, grip a steering wheel or hold a spoon.

MEET AN MSD VICTIM



The Story of Joe Baker (as told by his widow, Desi)

“My name is Desi Baker, and this is the story of my beloved, now-deceased, husband, Joe, who died at age 45.

“Joe was a wonderful man, husband, father and sportsman. He was a hard worker, and helped to raise his stepdaughter and stepson. He worked for 25 years as a welder and machinist. Two decades of lifting and bending heavy steel wore out two discs in Joe’s back. Joe was in constant pain and became deeply depressed. He couldn’t sleep, fish, or eat. He was 6′ 2” but weighed just 135 lbs. He slept 1 or 2 hours a night in the garage.

“The constant pain eventually drove Joe to shoot himself. After Joe’s suicide, I lost my husband and best friend.”

ERGONOMICS: 4 Ways to Protect Yourself from MSDs

Most MSDs happen because workers have to bend, twist, extend and exert their bodies in unnatural ways to perform a job task. The key to avoiding, MSDs, is to rethink the task and find a way to make it easier and more physically natural to carry out. The science of reworking job tasks to fit the human body—and not the other way around—is called **ergonomics.**

There are at least 4 ergonomic measures the worker in the picture could use to reshape his task and make it less of an MSD hazard:

1. Use Mechanical Devices to Move the Roll



2. Use a Team to Move the Roll



3. Use Tools that Make it Possible to Move the Roll in a Natural Posture



4. Lay Down Planks, Oil Mats or Other Objects to Make the Surface of the Floor More Even and Easier to Roll Things Across

