

Construction is an athletic event! The importance of being warmed up prior to starting construction work (or any work involving heavy lifting) is just like getting ready for a sporting event.

Stretching is a means to avoid the most common body sprain/strain injuries. Stretching before lifting is especially helpful to avoid back injuries. According to safety experts, over half of all workers' compensation claims and costs were due to sprain/strains.

The construction worker is an athlete, though it may not have the glory of hearing the 12 cheer for you. Taking care of yourself is important, before work begins, during the day and even afterwards. Stretching throughout the day is beneficial. Not stretching after work can be a problem. This causes muscles and joints to seize up and stiffness to occur the following day. People who exercise infrequently or not at all are more prone to injury, mainly because their bodies are not conditioned to comfortably cope with movements that the body is not used to. Stretching can help resist injury as well as speed up injury recovery.

The hardest injury to live with is a back injury, and once you are injured expect repeat injuries. One professional study indicates that once you do injure your back, you are five times more likely to suffer a re-injury.

Stretching: In many instances, employees have demonstrated that those who stretched before starting work did not have any back sprain/strain or lifting injuries.

Why Stretch and Flex?

Soft tissue damage to a worker's body is the number one cause for worker compensation claims. It hurts not only the worker, but also hurts the company in its ability to keep their workforce safe, be competitive and profitable.

Benefits of stretch and flex:

Improves flexibility – It allows you to push your body beyond its comfort zone, thus increasing your overall physical ability.

Improves the range of motion in your joints - This provides better balance, which will help keep you mobile and less susceptible to falls.

Improves circulation – Stretching increases the blood flow to your muscles, thus improving your circulation.

Relieves stress – Stretching relaxes tense muscles that often accompany stress. This helps relax the mind as well.

Injury prevention and recovery – Stretching helps condition the muscles and joints, thus helping to prevent injuries and reduce recovery time.

Improves posture and technique – Stretching prevents muscles and joints from seizing up and improves elasticity, allowing better posture and technique.

Assists in achieving better coordination, muscle control and proper technique in work tasks.

Helpful Hints:

- Go into stretching with a relaxed and open mind.
- Stretch to the point where it is comfortable, not painful.
- Do not strain when you stretch – straining keeps the muscle from relaxing.
- As the feeling of the stretch changes to a mild stretch, stretch a little further, a comfortable stretch with no pain.
- Don't bounce when you stretch. That causes injuries. Always stretch to the tight side first.
- Breathe with a slow, normal rhythm. Do not hold your breath.

Also drink plenty of water, keep yourself hydrated, keep your electrolytes up and eat a healthy diet with fruit and vegetables. It can have good and lasting health effects on your body and its flexibility.

You are the most valuable resource and asset a company has. Take care of yourself.

Additional Discussion Notes:

Demonstrate proper stretching exercises.

Remember: Stretching before you start work will make your job easier and helps prevent injuries on the job. Try it at home too.