

Lessons Learned

Safe Lifting



What Happened?

An employee began experiencing lower back pain during work. The pain occurred when the employee was rushing through a heavy workload and was **lifting two full crates simultaneously**. Job tasks for the injured employee involve **filling, lifting, and flipping crates of water bottles**, which are exceptionally heavy when full. On the day of the injury, the affected employee was the only person performing water bottle filling and lifting in the clean cage wash area.

The affected employee felt pain during the work shift, which increased with movement. He went to Workforce Health and Safety, where he was evaluated for a lower back injury. This is one of several injuries that have occurred during lifting water or performing similar tasks.

Why Did This Happen?

The photos shown on the right are examples of the water bottle filling and lifting tasks that the employee was performing when the injury occurred.

- **Two crates were lifted simultaneously**, which were too heavy for one employee to raise on his own.
- **The employee had not received safe lifting training for several years**, and was unaware of safe lifting practices that might have prevented the injury.
- **The workload was increased** due to the volume of cages that needed to be cleaned, which led to rushing during work tasks.
- **The employee carried full crates for several meters**, which increased strain on the lower back.
- **Anti-fatigue mats were not used** at fill stations.

Lessons Learned

- **Safe lifting techniques can prevent injuries.** Employees should be aware of proper safe lifting techniques and practice them routinely, particularly when filling water bottles:
 - Get as close to the object as possible.
 - Use a wide stance with one foot forward.
 - Keep your back straight and use your legs and hips to lower yourself to the object.
 - Place one hand on the side of the object farthest from you, and the other on the side closest to you. Grasp firmly with both hands.
 - Tighten your core muscles, look forward and upward, and keep a straight and strong back.
 - Hold the load close to your body.
 - Exhale during lifting, and do not hold your breath.
 - Maintain a neutral position and avoid pinching your fingers.
- **Avoid overexertion**, and lift only as much as your body will let you. “Listen” to your body when it says it’s too much, and take rest breaks if you need them.
- **Get help** if you need it.



**Weill Cornell
Medicine**

Updated February 2021

Environmental Health and Safety

TEL 646-962-7233 WEB weill.cornell.edu/ehs EMAIL ehs@med.cornell.edu

Weill Cornell Medicine | 402 East 67th Street, Room LA-0020 | New York, NY 10065

/Users/dom2016/Documents/EHS/Documentation/Lessons Learned/LL Safe Lifting.docx