

Health Care

Safety Talks Packet

Table of Contents

Safety Meeting Attendance Form.....	3
Different Types of Lift Aids.....	5
Do Your Part to Keep Our Workplace Safe	7
Exercise Caution When Using Acetone.....	8
Flammable and Combustible Liquids in the Workplace.....	10
Healthy Housekeeping Habits in the Hospital	11
How Mentoring Others Keeps Everyone Safe	12
Keeping Violence Out of Our Place of Healing	13
Participating in a Safe Patient Handling Committee	15
PPE for Injury and Illness Prevention	17
Avoid Injury — Practice Safe Lifting.....	19
Prevent Slips and Falls at Your Workplace.....	21
Protect Our Facility with Chemical Safety	23
Reduce Workplace Accidents.....	25
Repositioning a Patient	27
Safety Precautions for Handling Human Remains.....	29
Scrubs Safety	30
Stay Safe Around Infectious Materials.....	31
Staying Safe from Falling Objects.....	33
Staying Safe When Working in a New Area	34
Take Care of Your Hands	35
Tips for Toxic Chemical Safety	36
Using a Hoyer Lift for a Bed Transfer.....	38
Using NIOSH-approved Respirators.....	40
Vehicle Safety Precautions for Emergency Responders.....	42
Working with Chemicals? We've Got You Covered.....	45

Safety Meeting Attendance Form

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Safety Matters

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Different Types of Lift Aids

Properly using lift aids can improve both your safety and the patient's safety during transfers. There are several types of lift aids, and it is essential to know when and how to use them correctly.

Two Main Operations of Lifts

Lift aids can generally be classified into two main categories: power lifts and manual lifts. Power lifts use electricity, usually from a rechargeable battery or an outlet. Manual lifts do not use an electrical power source but use other mechanical functions, like hydraulics.

Basic Sling Lift Components

A common type of lift is the sling lift. This can help transfer patients who have limited mobility or are paralyzed. In general, sling lifts provide a mechanism to move a patient into an upright, seated position while their back is supported.

Sling lift designs vary by manufacturer, but basic components of a floor-based, full-body model often include the following parts:

- The mast is a bar that is connected to the base, and it rises vertically.
- The boom is an angled bar at the top of the lift that extends over the patient.
- The spreader bar, or sling bar, is often bow-shaped, and it hangs from the boom.
- The sling supports the patient and is attached to the spreader bar.
- Various clips and latches secure the sling.

Different Types of Sling Lifts

There are several types of sling lifts, and they have variable setups, uses and ways to operate them.

- Floor-based sling lifts have castor wheels that allow the device to be movable.
- Foldable portable lifts are a type of floor-based lift that is relatively light and can be folded and transported or stored.
- Sit-to-stand lifts are floor-based lifts that can be used to assist patients who have difficulty moving from a seated position to a full or partial standing position.
- Fixed ceiling lifts have a lift unit mounted on a track system that is permanently attached to the ceiling.
- Portable ceiling lifts have a lift unit that can be moved. They may also have portable track systems that can be packed, transported and set up in another room.
- Bariatric patient lifts have higher weight capacities.
- Pool lifts gently lower or lift patients into and out of tubs or pools.

How to Use Sling Lifts

It is essential to review the manufacturer's instructions prior to using a specific lift to operate it correctly and safely.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration has also compiled a list of best practices to help mitigate the risks associated with using lifts. As operators of patient sling lifts, you should follow these procedures:

- Do not use a lift for which you have not received training for.
- Understand how to operate these lifts.
- Always communicate with the patient about what will happen before any lifting occurs.
- Match the sling to the specific lift and the patient's size, weight and hip measurement. The patient lift manufacturer must approve the sling for a specific lift, as no sling is universally compatible across lifts.
- Inspect the sling fabric and straps to ensure they are not frayed or stressed at the seams or damaged in other ways. If there are signs of wear, do not use the sling.
- Keep all clips, latches and hanger bars securely fastened while operating the lift.
- Keep the patient lift's base in the maximum open position and situate the lift to provide stability.
- Safely position the patient's arms inside the sling straps.
- Ensure the patient is not restless or agitated.
- Lock the wheels on any device that will receive a patient, such as a wheelchair,

stretcher, bed or chair.

- Ensure the weight limitations for the lift and sling are not exceeded.
- Follow the manufacturer's instructions for washing and maintaining the sling.
- Always fill out the maintenance safety inspection checklist prior to using the lift. This can help with the detection of worn or damaged parts that need immediate replacement.

You should also check the patient's physical capabilities, medical condition and mental status prior to using a patient lift and ensure the environment and equipment are prepared for its use. Remember, more than one person may be needed to operate a lift safely.

Other Types of Lift Aids

Not all lift aids use slings. For example, some sit-to-stand lifts may use belts and straps to ensure patients are safely secured. No matter the type of device, proper use is essential to reduce the risk of injury to yourself and to patients. Additionally, make sure to follow the manufacturer's instructions on cleaning and sanitizing the lift and its components.

Working safely is everyone's responsibility. If you have any questions about lifts or other safety matters, do not hesitate to ask your supervisor.

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Do Your Part to Keep Our Workplace Safe

Preventing injury and illness on the job is something all employees should take seriously—nothing less than your future is at stake. An on-the-job accident, infection or serious illness could very easily disable you, leaving your financial security and future plans up in the air.

You and your coworkers can get your own safety program off the ground by giving your supervisors ideas on how things can be made safer. In a healthcare environment, any idea, no matter how small it may seem to you, may prevent a serious accident.

If you are a seasoned employee, you can use your years of valuable experience to spot potential safety and health hazards. Or, if you are a new employee, you may be able to spot something right away that someone who has been there for a while may have overlooked.

Here are some examples of rules you can follow to set an example for others and help your safety program succeed.

- Do not engage in horseplay in the facility at any time—stay focused on the task at hand.
- Allow your coworkers to stay focused at all times by refraining from distracting actions.
- Always wear the required personal protective equipment, especially when working with needles, toxic chemicals and patients with highly communicable

diseases and illnesses.

- Watch your footing at all times. Wear slip-resistant shoes, and do not run.
- Sanitation is key: keep yourself and your work area clean and free from debris.
- Know your limits—if you feel for any reason that you cannot complete your work safely, stop and decide what you need to do to stay out of harm's way.
- Never perform work that you are unauthorized to do.
- Know what to do in case of emergency, whether it's an on-the-job injury or natural disaster.

In short, safety takes teamwork. Whatever your job is and whatever your duties include, keep your eyes open for hazards and report them. Help keep our safety program on solid ground!

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Exercise Caution When Using Acetone

Dealing with acetone in the workplace requires special care and safety precautions. Acetone is highly flammable and although not highly toxic, exposure can be irritating and painful.

To help keep employees, patients and others safe, it's important to know how to work with acetone properly, wear the appropriate protective gear and know what to do in an emergency.

Wear Personal Protective Equipment

Employees engaged in routine handling of acetone should wear nitrile butyl rubber gloves and rubber aprons for protection against skin contact. Chemical goggles should be worn, and when complete face protection is necessary, a face shield should be worn.

Fire Hazards and Prevention

Acetone is highly flammable and poses a serious fire hazard. It is capable of igniting materials even at room temperature. All sources of ignition, including spark-producing equipment, should be eliminated in areas where acetone is stored, handled or used. An acetone explosion can occur when it is mixed with any of the following chemicals:

- Hydrogen peroxide
- Nitric acid
- Sulfur dichloride

Because acetone has the capability to travel considerable distances in vapor form, confine it to a controlled, non-windy environment, away

from the above chemicals, patients and other visitors.

If an acetone fire breaks out, specific fire extinguishers must be used. These include foam, carbon dioxide and dry chemical extinguishers. To prevent spreading the fire, water used on an acetone fire should be in the form of a spray or fog. Ask your supervisor if you do not know the extinguisher locations at your workplace.

Control Vapor Concentrations

For most operations, vapor can be kept at safe levels by enclosing the work area, properly ventilating or a combination of both. Opening windows or doors offers adequate ventilation for most small uses. Local exhaust may be needed with larger operations in order to capture the vapors at the source and keep them out of the breathing zone of everyone in the facility. Vapor concentrations may cause drowsiness and dizziness in those exposed to it. Contact your supervisor for specific ventilation information when working with acetone.

First Aid

If anyone has inhaled small amounts of acetone vapor, he or she should be moved to an area with fresh air. If large amounts have been inhaled, the person should be moved to an area with fresh air, and medical personnel should be

called immediately.

If acetone is splashed in the eyes, flush out immediately with large quantities of running water for at least 15 minutes by lifting the eyelids, and seek medical attention as soon as possible. Skin that comes in contact with acetone should be washed with soap and water, and any contaminated clothing should be removed.

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Flammable and Combustible Liquids in the Workplace

Flammable and combustible liquids are present in many products you may use at the workplace. Gasoline, oil and many common products such as solvents, cleaners, adhesives, disinfectants, paints, waxes and polishes may be highly flammable or combustible. If used or stored improperly, these types of liquids can cause serious injury or death to employees, patients or other visitors.

To understand the dangers of flammable and combustible liquids, it is important to know that it is the vapor, not the liquid, that burns. For instance, an explosion can occur when an employee drains a gasoline tank on a company emergency vehicle and begins repairs involving welding on the tank. Although the tank is empty, it contains gasoline vapors. If the vapor concentration is within the explosive range and a source of ignition is introduced, an explosion can occur, easily injuring the worker, coworkers, patients or others near the site.

Staying Safe

The following work practices must be followed when handling flammable and combustible liquids:

- Use Class I flammable liquids (any liquid that can ignite at less than 100° F) only where no open flame or other ignition source is in the path of the vapor.
- All containers must be properly labeled and marked with the complete chemical name.
- All containers must be metal, sealed with a cap or lid and not damaged or leaking.
- Do not store flammable liquid containers in any areas accessible to patients or visitors. Never store containers next to exits, hallways, stairways or doors, even for a brief

time. Flammable containers also may not be placed where they can interfere with the exit from an area or building in an emergency situation.

- Dispense flammable and combustible liquids with approved pump or metal self-closing faucets only.
- Do not transfer liquid unless an employee who is trained to stop the transfer in the event of a spill is present.
- When transferring flammable liquids from one container to another, the two containers must be connected by a conducting wire and one container must be grounded.
- Never smoke in storage and handling areas of combustible and flammable liquids, or in a 25 foot radius around these areas.
- Maintain access to fire extinguishers and other emergency response equipment at all times. At least one fire extinguisher must be located within 10 feet of any flammable or combustible liquid storage area, and within 50 feet of a flammable liquid use area.

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Healthy Housekeeping Habits in the Hospital

Often, our facility is a hectic place as employees with many different responsibilities are constantly moving from one part of the facility to another. If proper housekeeping habits were not practiced, the hospital would become cluttered and dirty—and therefore hazardous—for both staff and patients. This would not only be aggravating and counterproductive, but it would also be very dangerous for everyone in the hospital. Proper sanitization and cleaning are fundamental to our patients' health. Moreover, slips, trips and falls are a common cause of injury on the job site, and inadequate housekeeping is a contributing factor in most of these accidents.

What is Housekeeping?

Avoiding dangerous conditions like those described above requires a commitment to housekeeping by every individual on our team. This means making spill cleanup, proper disposal of hazardous substances, general cleaning and correct storage a priority every day, throughout the day.

Good housekeeping also means constant vigilance. Remove any object or material that obstructs a pathway on the floor and take care of any other materials that could pose a possible fire hazard or danger for coworkers. This includes:

- Cords
- Medical equipment
- Cables
- Empty containers
- Food
- Water or other spills

Do Your Part

Follow these housekeeping tips to keep yourself and your coworkers safe.

- Make sanitization your top priority.
- Make sure all containers are correctly labeled.
- Place wet floor signs where there may be a slipping hazard, and remove them as soon as the surface is dry. Clean up spills immediately.
- Keep flammable or hazardous wastes in covered, separate waste containers.
- Familiarize yourself with substances that cannot be used together, such as oxygen and fuel gases.
- Clean up your work area immediately after finishing a task—do not leave the area cluttered with tools and supplies.

Risks to Avoid

When practicing good housekeeping, there are several things you should always avoid:

- Do not store supplies where they may be mistaken for something else.
- Never pile material around fire extinguishers, sprinklers or emergency exits.
- Do not collect broken glass in plastic bags.
- Never use bare hands when collecting waste. Using gloves prevents cuts and splinters.

Our Commitment to You

At , we put your safety first. If you have any doubts about the security of your area of our facility—regarding housekeeping or any other issue—do not hesitate to talk to your supervisor.

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How Mentoring Others Keeps Everyone Safe

Have you ever worked with someone who inspired you? A hardworking person can have a powerful influence on their team, especially when they are working with someone who is new to the job or to the company. As the coworker of a new employee, consider yourself the most important role model during their first few weeks. Your attitude and your respect of policies and safety procedures could save them or a patient from an accident, injury or serious illness!

Be a Safety Mentor

You know that the workplace in the health care industry is full of hazards. At , we have stressed the importance of doing your job the safe way, and we've given you a wealth of knowledge about the risks of the job and ways to stay safe. When you are working around others, especially if they are new to our workplace, it is your responsibility to share that knowledge to protect them, our patients and yourself.

It may take a while for new employees to adjust to the job. Those that have never held a job like this before or were employed by an organization with a weak safety program will need considerable safety instruction and leadership. While managers will attempt to train them in workplace safety as thoroughly as possible, employees will naturally look to you for advice and information. Their early impressions of the way you value safety will set the stage for their future work habits.

Always Set a Good Example

In this important time of transition, your actions will speak louder than your words. If you cut corners when sanitizing, for example, you demonstrate to a new employee that safety is not important at . When you do not follow safety procedures, you are ultimately putting in danger new employees who are learning from and imitating you—and those whose

lives are in their hands.

On the other hand, some new employees may come to from organizations that emphasize safety like we do. In that case, their personal respect for you will grow when they see that you care about workplace safety just as much as they do.

You are aware that accidents are a reality in the health care workplace. Take care to be sure that your new coworkers are aware of the dangers, too. Doing so will keep everyone at our facility safe.

Think again of that coworker that has inspired you, and do your best to keep them in mind when you are working with new employees. Everyone will be safer when you make a good impression on a new employee, so do your part. Now is your chance to inspire!

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Keeping Violence Out of Our Place of Healing

Although we strive to create a safe work environment for you, the risk of workplace violence in any health care facility remains a serious safety and health issue. Violence can range from threats and verbal abuse to physical assaults and homicide. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), the health care sector leads all other industries with 45 percent of all nonfatal assaults against workers resulting in time off work.

Why Are We At Risk?

Almost half of violent incidents involve a patient assaulting an employee, while other incidents occur between a stranger and an employee or between former or current co-workers. Violence can happen at any time, and no one is immune. The following characteristics make health care facilities particularly hazardous:

- Medications and money available in the pharmacy
- Employee evening shifts in potentially high crime areas
- Employee exposure to sometimes violent, mentally unstable patients
- Uncooperative or combative patients
- Rooms containing furniture or items that could be used as weapons

We have taken steps to make the facility as safe as possible. Through our Workplace Violence Prevention Program, we do not tolerate threats, bullying, harassment or any other form of

violence.

Identifying Your Risk

Workplace violence can include actions or words that endanger or harm you, including the following:

- Verbal or physical harassment
- Verbal or physical threats
- Assaults or other violence
- Any other behavior that causes you to feel unsafe (bullying or sexual harassment)

Staying Safe

Nothing can guarantee that you will not become a victim of workplace violence, but you do have the right to expect a workplace that promotes safety from violence, threats and harassment. Contribute to the safety measures we have in place as follows:

- Carpool with others on your shift so you arrive and depart together.
- Implement a buddy system when treating high-risk patients so you are never alone.
- Know contact information of local authorities for quick access in the event of violence.

- Become aware of and report violent or threatening behavior or other warning signs.
- Take all threats seriously.
- Learn how to recognize, avoid or diffuse potentially violent situations by attending personal safety training programs.
- Alert supervisors to any concerns about safety or security.
- Report all incidents immediately in writing.

Overall, stay alert and aware. Make sure that you are effectively trained in how to handle a potentially dangerous situation, including conflict resolution. Adhere to all of our policies and be aware of the hazards to reduce your risk of being a victim of physical violence.

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Participating in a Safe Patient Handling Committee

Whether it's due to age, illness or injury, some patients in health care settings may struggle with their mobility. These patients usually require assistance to perform daily tasks, including sitting up, standing and walking. When helping patients with such tasks, it's important for health care employees like you to utilize proper precautions. That's where safe patient handling can help.

Safe patient handling pertains to the utilization of assistive equipment to move and reposition patients with minimal physical effort, therefore limiting the likelihood of accidents during these tasks and protecting both yourself and patients from associated injuries. Most states have specific requirements regarding safe patient handling procedures in health care facilities, including the creation of safe patient handling committees.

What Are Safe Patient Handling Committees?

Safe patient handling committees refer to groups of employees who are responsible for carrying out the following activities at health care facilities:

- Conducting hazard assessments for all patient-handling tasks to better understand associated safety exposures
- Selecting equipment (e.g., lifts, belts, recliners, stretchers and transfer boards) to assist with patient-handling tasks and reduce potential hazards

- Determining how much patient-handling equipment is necessary, where it will be stored and who can use it
- Creating workplace documentation (e.g., a program and policy) that outlines safe patient handling procedures to follow
- Enforcing safe patient handling procedures through routine staff training and intervention
- Evaluating patient-handling equipment, documentation and procedures on a set schedule (e.g., annually) and updating them as needed

These committees are typically comprised of employees across various departments (e.g., senior leadership, risk management, housekeeping and HR) at health care facilities. Additionally, most states require half of the participants in these committees to be nonmanagerial employees who provide direct care to patients.

As such, health care employees are usually recruited by existing participants to join safe patient handling committees based on their involvement with patient care and how frequently they engage in patient-handling tasks. These committees should also have a designated chair and co-chair who develop a periodic meeting schedule (e.g., monthly or quarterly) and implement group participation standards.

Safe patient handling committees provide a wide range of benefits. Specifically, they can make all the difference in fostering a strong, collaborative safety culture and establishing effective patient-handling procedures on-site. This can enable health care workers to leverage proper equipment to mobilize patients and avoid potentially dangerous manual tasks.

In turn, employees can better safeguard themselves against common patient-handling injuries—namely, back sprains and strains—and promote high-quality care by minimizing mobility hazards (e.g., falls and pressure ulcers) among patients.

Playing Your Part in a Safe Patient Handling Committee

If you become a participant in your workplace's safe patient handling committee, be sure to follow these best practices:

- **Attend committee meetings and complete follow-up work.** Make it a priority to attend and actively participate in committee meetings, paying attention to any new developments regarding safe patient handling procedures. In addition, complete any follow-up tasks assigned at these meetings, such as conducting hazard

assessments or reviewing patient-handling documentation. Communicate with your fellow participants, the committee chair and the co-chair if you have any questions or concerns about attending meetings or completing follow-up work.

- **Promote safe patient handling procedures.** Uphold the procedures outlined in safe patient handling training sessions and workplace documentation, and encourage your co-workers to do the same. In the event that you notice a co-worker engaging in poor patient-handling practices, don't hesitate to intervene; discuss these concerns with them and walk through the proper precautions.
- **Share your ideas for improvement.** If you notice any new or ongoing hazards that haven't been addressed by existing safe patient handling procedures or you develop ways to improve upon these procedures, make sure to share them with the committee.

Conclusion

Participating in your workplace's safe patient handling committee allows you to play a valuable role in ensuring successful patient-handling measures on-site, keeping related accidents to a minimum and safeguarding both yourself and patients from serious injuries.

Talk to your supervisor for more information on safe patient handling procedures.

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PPE for Injury and Illness Prevention

The American health care system is one of the largest industries in the country, and with about 18 million workers today, it is the fastest-growing sector of the U.S. economy.

Fortunately, injuries and illnesses have been decreasing for the health care industry, but that doesn't mean you can take your safety for granted. Get the protection you need from personal protective equipment (PPE) to stay healthy and happy in your job.

Often times, workers don't wear their safety equipment because it's a nuisance to put on or because it's bulky and uncomfortable. It can be tempting not to put PPE on at all unless the safety supervisor is looking, but ultimately, it is up to you to be a professional and recognize the life-saving benefits of PPE.

A poorly fitted piece of protective equipment can cause headache or pain, and if it does, see your supervisor immediately to have it adjusted or re-fitted. But most of the time, it's just a matter of getting used to wearing these items. This is a lot easier when you remember that, like the football player, you stand a better chance of continuing successfully with your job and your home life if you are protected from possible serious injury by protective equipment.

Health care workers face a variety of on-the-job hazards that can be prevented by proper PPE use, including needlestick injuries, back injuries and latex allergy. Here is a quick refresher on the types of equipment you should be using in your day-to-day work.

Foot protection is a must for all workers in health care. Open-toed shoes are not acceptable, and your footwear should have ample sole protection to prevent injury from stepping on needles or broken materials. Foot protection should also be slip-resistant to protect against trips and falls.

Hand and arm protection is one of the most important pieces of PPE to protect against illness and infection. It must be worn at all times when working with patients, but especially when working with bodily fluids. Chemical hazards are also a concern in this industry that effective PPE may protect against. Select hand and arm protection that is comfortable, and if possible, test it beforehand for skin allergies.

In some cases, **full-body protection** may be necessary to protect against all harmful agents in the workplace or to prevent outside infection from contaminating a room, surface or patient. When full-body protection is required, it should not be taken lightly. It must be worn whenever you are in designated areas.

When there is a chance of physical, chemical or radiation damage to the eyes or face, you must wear appropriate PPE. Everyday glasses do not qualify and are no excuse for lack of proper

protection—request eye and face PPE that fits over glasses.

Respiratory protection is a crucial piece of PPE for health care workers because without it, toxins may enter straight into the body. It is important for you to understand how to use this PPE properly and what its limitations are.

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Avoid Injury — Practice Safe Lifting

Lifting—whether it be patients or heavy medical equipment—is a common activity in a health care setting, and it is often forgotten that there are proper techniques that need to be followed to avoid injury. In fact, lower back injuries are the most common work-related injury cited by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA).

Safe Lifting Basics

Safe lifting plays an important role in keeping your back healthy and you safe. Here are safe lifting techniques that take strain off the lower back area:

- If a patient is too heavy to lift by yourself, ask for help.
- Use a lift to help assist with heavier patients.
- Clear away any potential obstacles before transporting the patient or equipment. Be mindful of patients and other employees.
- While carrying anything, your grip should be firm. Carrying objects will change your balance. To keep this to a minimum, hold the load close to your body and to your normal center of gravity, between the legs and shoulders.
- Use good foot positioning. Your feet should be shoulder width apart, with one foot beside and the other foot behind the object that you are going to lift. This allows you to use the full power

of your leg muscles. Leg muscles are stronger and more powerful than back muscles, so let your legs do the work.

- Bend your knees. Bending over at the waist to reach for the object or person you want to lift puts strain on your back, shoulder and neck muscles.
- Keep your arms and elbows as close to your body as you can while lifting. If you have to stretch your arms out completely away from your body, ask for assistance with the lift.
- Use your feet to change direction. Don't twist your body. Twisting adds to the stress of the lift and affects your balance.
- To lower the object or patient, bend your knees as you did to pick it up. Make sure your hands and feet are clear when lowering the object or patient.

Safe lifting of heavy objects or patients requires training and practice. And when equipment is available, it should be used to lift and carry heavy objects. Patient lifts are becoming more common in health care settings and are meant to be used—don't feel embarrassed to use them.

Team Lifting

When another person is helping you lift, teamwork is very important. If you're going to be carrying the object or patient to another location, both of you should coordinate this prior to lifting. Check the route and clearance. One worker needs to be in a position to observe and direct the other. Lifting and lowering should be done in unison. Don't let the load drop suddenly without warning your partner.

Your Safety is Important

Proper lifting methods protect against injury and make continued work much easier. It is important to think about what you are going to do before lifting an object—over time, these safe lifting techniques will become habit. Contact your supervisor if you have any questions or concerns regarding safe lifting techniques.

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Prevent Slips and Falls at Your Workplace

A janitorial employee was scrubbing a hallway with water and a cleaning agent. An observant worker realized that soon, dozens of employees would be going down this hallway on their way to the timeclock. In addition to a slip hazard, a continually wet surface promotes the growth of bacteria and mold that can cause infections. This person then took the proper action to avert this potentially dangerous situation by setting up a wet floor sign and making sure the floor would dry in a timely manner.

Do Your Safety Part

An unguarded wet floor is only one of the many causes that accounts for millions of work-related injuries every year. Which is why it is important to spot unsafe conditions that could lead to slips and falls, and do what you can to prevent them.

There are various ways to suffer slips and falls while working. You can slip and lose your balance, you can trip over objects left improperly in your walkway or you can simply fall from an elevated position to the ground. To avoid slips and falls, be on the lookout for foreign substances on the floor. Watch for the following:

- Deposits of water
- Food
- Grease or oil
- Soap
- Paper

- Other debris

Even small quantities are enough to make you fall.

Good Housekeeping Counts

When entering a building from the outdoors or from debris areas, clean your footwear thoroughly. Snowy and rainy weather requires a doormat at each entrance to allow for complete wiping of shoes. Avoid running, walk safely and do not change directions too sharply.

Beware of tripping hazards. Trash, unused materials or any object left in hallways designed for pedestrian traffic invites falls. Extension cords, tools, medical equipment, wheelchairs and other items should be removed or properly barricaded off. If equipment or supplies are left in walkways, report it. Let the proper personnel remove it. And keep passageways clean of debris by using trash and recycling bins.

Practice Prevention

Walk in designated walking areas. Short cuts through machine, storage or cooking areas invite accidents. Concentrate on where you are going – horseplay and inattention leaves you vulnerable to unsafe conditions. Hold on to handrails when using stairs or ramps. They are there to protect you should a fall occur. If you're carrying a heavy load that hampers your ability

to properly ascend or descend stairs, use the elevator or find help.

The worst falls are from elevated positions such as ladders, and can result in serious injury or death. Learn and practice ladder safety. For example, when climbing, use a ladder of proper length that is in good condition. Keep it placed on a firm surface. Do not climb a ladder placed on machinery, crates, supplies or boxes. Keep the ladder's base one foot away from the wall for every four feet of height. Don't over-reach. Always have control of your balance when working from a ladder. Never climb a ladder with your hands full.

Slips and falls occur every day. The extent of injuries and their recurrence can be minimized through proper safety knowledge, good housekeeping and practicing prevention.

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Protect Our Facility with Chemical Safety

Storing or handling chemicals in the workplace puts all employees at serious risk for injuries due to explosions. For this reason, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) requires worksites where hazardous chemicals are used to have an emergency action plan (EAP). takes this requirement seriously, as employee and patient safety in our facility is our top priority.

The EAP describes the procedures to follow during an emergency, such as a chemical spill, leak or explosion, including the following:

- Who to notify
- Who is in charge and who else has responsibilities in responding to the incident
- Who is responsible for each task
- How to evacuate the site

OSHA also requires all employees to be trained in EAP procedures, so that everyone is prepared. Notify your supervisor if you have not yet had training in EAP procedures or if you would like a refresher.

Prevention

The first priority when working with chemicals is to try and prevent a spill, leak or explosion. You can contribute to that goal by doing the following:

- Knowing and understanding the

chemicals you're working with, including any hazards—refer to the appropriate Safety Data Sheet (SDS) or ask questions if you are unsure

- Following all safety precautions and protocols
- Helping to make sure all chemicals remain labeled in their proper container

When an Incident Occurs

To determine if a chemical spill, leak or explosion is hazardous or requires special cleanup procedures, do the following:

- Identify the chemical(s) involved.
- Refer to the SDS for any chemical involved to find out how flammable and/or reactive it is, what protective equipment and spill cleanup procedures are needed.
- For chemicals resulting in a hazardous fire or explosion, refer to the SDS also for firefighting instructions.

Emergency Procedures

In the event of a chemical spill, leak or explosion, be sure to do the following:

- Immediately notify your supervisor.

- Notify other workers and patients in the area.
- Activate emergency alarms.
- Call 911.
- Keep people out of the area.
- Leave the area if the spill cannot be readily contained, or if it presents an immediate danger to life or health.
- Follow the evacuation rules in the EAP, especially when concerning patient evacuation.
- Leave cleanup to trained personnel, such as a Hazardous Materials team.

Do not try to do the following:

- Rescue or help injured people unless you are sure you will be safe
- Clean up a spill yourself, except where permitted or required by site rules and the EAP

OSHA requires these safety measures, and so do we. It is our hope that an accident like this never happens, but all employees should be prepared in case it does. Make sure you learn these precautions and follow them if you ever must respond to a hazardous chemical spill, leak or explosion, to help keep yourself, co-workers and our patients safe.

Safety Matters

Health Care

Provided by: Bitner Henry Insurance Group

Reduce Workplace Accidents

When you're working with and around patients all day, the potential for safety hazards is extensive. However, many accidents can be avoided by following safety procedures and taking appropriate precautions.

Be Aware of Safety Hazards

Most accidents are caused by an unsafe act, an unsafe condition or a combination of the two. For example, a worker could suffer an injury due to chemical exposure—an accident due to the unsafe act of not wearing protective equipment. Or, a patient could trip over a wire on the ground, which would be the result of an unsafe condition. In either instance, the accident could have been prevented by following proper safety precautions.

Because your job and your working environment pose potential hazardous situations, it's important to understand what causes accidents so that you can avoid them. While it is impossible to list all of the hazards you may encounter while working, common ones may include the following:

- Injuries due to debris or spills that are not cleaned up
- Failing to wear proper personal protective equipment when working with patients or chemicals
- Mishandling, misuse, improper storage or improper disposal of medical equipment or supplies
- Contamination situations due to a

failure to take safety precautions

Don't Cut Safety Corners

The first step to keeping yourself and co-workers safe is to stay alert on the job and don't let routine or familiarity lure you into carelessness. Always observe safety precautions before and during a task, even if those precautions make the task more inconvenient or take longer to complete. Cutting corners may not seem like a big deal, but doing so is a primary cause of accidents.

Practice Safety

Next, know your job. The more you know about your job, the safer you'll be. Know the proper procedures and safety precautions for any task you do, and if any questions arise during your workday, be sure to talk to your supervisor. Also, when appropriate, explain safety procedures and precautions to patients so that they can help maintain a safe environment.

Also, know which tasks, areas and situations are more prone to hazardous conditions, and always be on the lookout for anything unsafe. If you see a patient behaving unsafely, intervene to correct the behavior. Or if you spot a hazardous condition, either fix the problem yourself or report it to a supervisor or maintenance worker.

Get Involved

Finally, make a personal contribution. A good way to start this is to follow all safety rules, even if you think they are unnecessary or slow you down. Certain rules are made for your protection and the protection of patients, so follow them. Also, just because an unsafe act is not specifically prohibited, it doesn't mean you should do it. Use your common sense when evaluating if an act is safe or not, and always be sure to consider potential impact on the patients in your facility.

Develop a safe attitude! This is probably one of the most difficult things to face because most of us have the mistaken notion that it's always someone else who gets hurt, never us. If we all do our share in observing safety rules and staying alert for unsafe conditions, everyone will benefit by having fewer accidents.

Safety Matters

Health Care

Provided by: Bitner Henry Insurance Group

Repositioning a Patient

Each year, an estimated 1 million to 3 million U.S. patients suffer from pressure injuries—such as pressure sores, bedsores or pressure ulcers—according to the National Institutes of Health. While some pressure injuries are unavoidable, most can be prevented through patient repositioning. Patient repositioning consists of moving a patient from one position into another to alleviate or redistribute pressure, including pulling patients up in bed, turning them on their side or sitting them up in a chair or wheelchair.

Patients should be repositioned every two hours to keep blood flowing, help the skin stay healthy and prevent bedsores. However, each patient may require individualized care depending on their tissue tolerance, level of activity and mobility, general medical condition, overall treatment objectives, skin condition and comfort.

Bed Repositioning

If a patient has some mobility, they may be able to assist in the repositioning process by moving to one side of the bed, lying on their back with their knees bent and arms folded across their body and rolling onto their other side. However, if a patient has minimal mobility, they will require more assistance. It is important to use two caregivers or a mechanical lift to reposition a patient to prevent injury to yourself or the patient. When repositioning a patient in bed:

- Communicate with the patient before each step so they are aware of what you are going to do.

- Stand on the side of the bed the patient will be turning toward.
- Lower the bed rail and move the patient to the center of the bed to reduce their risk of rolling off the bed.
- Place the patient's top arm across their chest and stretch their bottom arm toward you.
- Cross the patient's upper ankle over their bottom ankle.
- Place one of your hands on the patient's shoulder and the other on their hip.
- Stand with one foot ahead of the other and shift your weight to your front foot while gently pulling the patient's shoulder toward you.
- Shift your weight to your back foot and gently pull the patient's hip toward you.
- Use pillows to provide extra comfort and support.

Once the patient is in the proper position, ensure their ankles, knees and elbows are not resting on top of each other. In addition, make sure their head and neck are in line with their spine. Finally, lift the side rails back into position.

and make sure the patient is comfortable.

Chair Repositioning

Chair-bound patients need to be adjusted more frequently than bed-bound patients. Patients with some mobility should shift their weight every 15 minutes, while patients with minimal mobility should be repositioned with assistance every hour.

A seated positioning system (SMS)—a glide sheet that prevents forward movement of the patient—can also be used when helping a patient reposition in a chair. This is done by using one or two caregivers. If you are the only one using the SPS, brace the chair with one of your feet and pull the SPS straps to glide the patient to a seated position. If there are two people using the SPS, stand on either side of the chair and pull one side of the SPS while bracing the chair so it doesn't move backward.

It's important that chair-bound patients have properly fitted equipment, otherwise, they may slouch, causing increased pressure on the buttocks, thighs and spine. Sagging seats should be replaced with solid seats that have appropriate pressure-reducing cushions.

Safety Matters

Health Care

Provided by: Bitner Henry Insurance Group

Safety Precautions for Handling Human Remains

Employers and workers face a variety of health hazards when handling or working near human remains. Those directly involved in recovery or other efforts that require the handling of remains are susceptible to bloodborne viruses (hepatitis and HIV) and bacteria that can cause diarrheal diseases (shigella and salmonella). Follow the recommended guidelines by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) in order to remain safe.

General Protections

- Hand Protection: When handling potentially infectious materials, use appropriate hand protection, including latex or nitrile gloves. These can be worn under heavy-duty gloves that protect you from cuts, puncture wounds or other injuries that could break the skin (from sharp, environmental debris or bone fragments). A combination of cut-proof inner layer gloves and a latex or similar outer layer will ensure that you are adequately protected.
- Foot Protection: Wear occupational footwear to protect against sharp debris.
- Eye and Face Protection: To protect your face from splashes of body fluids and fecal material, use a plastic face shield or a combination of eye protection (indirectly vented safety goggles) and a surgical mask.
- Hygiene Recommendations: Maintain hand hygiene to prevent the transmission of diarrheal and other diseases from fecal materials on your hands. Also, wash your hands with soap and water or with an alcohol-based hand cleaner immediately after removing your gloves.
 - Give prompt care to any wounds

sustained during work with human remains, including immediately washing your skin with soap and clean water. You should also be vaccinated for hepatitis B and get a tetanus booster, if needed.

- Do not wear personal protective equipment (PPE) and any underlying clothing if it has been damaged or penetrated by bodily fluids.
- Always disinfect your vehicles and equipment after the workday is over.

Are You at Risk?

There is no direct risk of infectious disease from being near human remains for those who are not directly involved in the recovery or other efforts that require handling. If you are walking by or working in the vicinity, it is not necessary for you to adhere to the precautions mentioned above.

Safety Matters

Health Care

Provided by: Bitner Henry Insurance Group

Scrubs Safety

In a recent study of hospital attire published by the American Journal of Infection Control, over 60 percent of the health care employee uniforms sampled tested positive for pathogens. Half of the samples tested positive for one or more different pathogens, with 11 percent of the discovered bugs being resistant to multiple front-line antibiotics.

While these are not shocking statistics given the nature of the job, these results do suggest a need for a closer look at how scrubs, and similar garments, are handled by health care workers.

Where to Wear

Unfortunately, scrubs are often worn in many places where they should not be. From trips out to lunch to running errands on the way home from work, health care workers often wear scrubs outside of the workplace and could potentially be opening the general public up to a day's worth of pathogen buildup.

While it may seem like an added hassle, it is important that you change in and out of your scrubs at work. Even if you may just be going out to lunch or running a quick errand on your break, there is no need to take the unnecessary risk. Never leave the building with your scrubs on.

Change Regularly

Researchers found that contamination increased the longer uniforms were worn. Changing scrubs daily instead of every two days cut down contamination from 29 to 8 percent.

Change your scrubs daily to reduce pathogen buildup. Even if scrubs appear clean, they could

still be host to lingering bacteria.

Don't Forget Your Hands

When analyzing the results, experts suggested that bacteria buildup on garments could in part be caused by employee neglect of proper hand-washing practices. It is important that along with proper uniform care you vigorously adhere to hand-washing standards to keep from transmitting potentially harmful pathogens from one area to another.

Safety Matters

Health Care

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Stay Safe Around Infectious Materials

Although it may be a part of your everyday tasks, it is important to remember that exposure to blood, body fluids and other potentially infectious materials (OPIM) can be hazardous to your health. Blood and body fluids, for example, may contain bloodborne pathogens—microorganisms that can cause illness and disease. These microorganisms are transmitted through contact with contaminated blood and body fluids.

Dangerous Tasks

While performing certain tasks on the job or assisting others who may be ill or injured, you must take extra precautions. Some dangerous tasks include those:

- Performed with the use of sharp implements like needles, razors blades and glass
- Requiring direct work and contact with blood and other body fluids
- Requiring the handling or disposing of contaminated trash or waste
- Requiring actions of a first-responder, like attending to a bleeding victim or performing CPR

Minimizing Exposure

- Use appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) when working with blood or infectious materials. Before using, check PPE for damage. Remove PPE carefully to avoid self-contamination. Dispose of contaminated

PPE correctly in leak-proof containers for disposal or for decontamination. Make sure you have been trained in the use of PPE and it has been documented.

- Use good personal hygiene. Wash exposed skin immediately with soap and water. Wash thoroughly after removing PPE. Flush exposed eyes, nose or mouth quickly and thoroughly with water. Cover any open wounds or cuts.
- Use good work practices. Minimize splashing of infectious materials. Clean up spills immediately. Clean and decontaminate all equipment and surfaces in contact with blood or other infectious material. Dispose of sharps in a puncture-proof, labeled container.
- Know the proper response for accidental exposures. Know the Bloodborne Pathogens Standard so you can respond without fear. Report on-the-job exposures promptly and seek immediate medical attention.

Responding to Exposure

In the event you experience an exposure to blood, body fluids or OPIM, immediately:

- Wash affected area thoroughly

- Report the incident to your supervisor
- Complete an incident report form
- Begin medical follow-up

If you have an exposure incident on the job in which your eyes, mouth, other mucous membrane or broken skin comes into contact with blood or other infectious materials, arrange for an immediate medical evaluation that:

- Documents what happened
- Identifies and tests the source individual if feasible
- Tests the exposed person's blood, if consent is obtained
- Provides counseling
- Evaluates any reported illness

Safety Matters

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Staying Safe from Falling Objects

Objects falling from above can pose a serious danger. While this type of hazard might typically be associated with construction businesses, health care facilities face similar dangers. Injuries caused by falling objects can range from broken bones to paralysis and can even result in death. Often, falling object accidents are caused by disorganized workspaces or material handling accidents.

Protect Yourself and Our Patients

Follow these guidelines to reduce your risk of injury from falling and flying objects.

- Do not leave loose or sharp items—e.g., scissors, knives or needles—on ledges, shelves, platforms or any high surface.
- Do not store anything on top of shelving units or cabinets. Anything that is not easily reachable presents a falling object hazard.
- Do not store commonly used items high up in patient rooms. Patients or their visitors could be injured while attempting to retrieve them.
- Do not open more than one drawer at a time in a file cabinet—this could cause the cabinet to tip over.
- Never stack heavy items to store them. Store them close to the floor, and never exceed the safe load capacity of shelving or storage units.
- Remember that stacks of paper, magazines or files can be considered heavy items if they were to fall.
- Since children are especially vulnerable, do not leave telephone cords or similar items where a child could reach them. Courteously

intervene if you feel a child needs additional parental control.

- Regularly scour the premises for unsafe storage methods. If you discover a situation that presents a falling object hazard, fix it or find a new way to store it immediately.
- If a coworker is on a ladder to retrieve an item at a height, do not stand or work under them.

Our Commitment to You

Your safety is our first priority at . If you have any doubt about safety on site—regarding falling objects or any other issue—talk to your supervisor. Keeping you and your coworkers safe requires everyone's cooperation.

Safety Matters

Health Care

Provided by: Bitner Henry Insurance Group

Staying Safe When Working in a New Area

Walking through different areas of your facility is a common occurrence, but it can also be dangerous if you don't stay alert. This is particularly true for employees leaving their old, familiar departments and moving into new roles in other areas.

New employees receive instructions regarding training and safety precautions. However, when changing roles and moving to another area, the transition process can operate very differently. Procedures and equipment may change and safety precautions may vary as well.

Safety in New Surroundings

Before entering another area, familiarize yourself with any special rules or procedures necessary for your safety. This might mean wearing special personal protective equipment or meeting certain regulations concerning employee actions.

During the transition to your new area, be on your guard at corners and close to equipment. Although other employees have their own safety regulations to follow, be cautious and ready to move in case something happens.

Look both ways before stepping out into high-traffic areas. In aisles wide enough for equipment traffic, use extreme caution.

Don't walk while you're looking in another direction. You could bump into coworkers, patients or other equipment. If you are unable to watch where you're walking, wait to continue moving until you can.

Watch out for slip, trip and fall hazards. Wet floors, misplaced equipment or other objects pose a danger to you and others. Be sure to keep floors and hallways clear of these things.

In addition, do not take shortcuts, regardless of how much time they save. Shortcuts are not approved routes and taking them can cause very serious injuries.

At times, it may be necessary to restrict your admittance to certain areas. Whether the restrictions are temporary or permanent, don't enter the area unless authorized to do so.

Safety Precautions

Stay safe when transitioning into a new work environment by remembering these basic safety precautions:

- Learn new safety procedures and protocols associated with your new role.
- Watch out for moving equipment and personnel.
- Look both ways before stepping into a high-traffic area.
- Use handrails.
- Keep your eyes open for slip, trip and fall hazards.
- Don't take shortcuts.
- Stay out of restricted areas.
- Ask for directions regarding unfamiliar safety guidelines.

Safety Matters

Health Care

Provided by: Bitner Henry Insurance Group

Take Care of Your Hands

Of the many tools that we have available, our hands are the most valuable. They provide us with the dexterity necessary to perform precise maneuvers that even the most advanced technology cannot replicate. Even the simplest tasks are difficult for a person that does not have full use of their hands.

Everyday tasks can put your hands at risk. Hand injuries on the job are quite common, but many are preventable. There are lots of things you can do to keep your hands safe—here are a few of the most common.

Wear Gloves

Always protect your hands by wearing work gloves when handling rough materials or using your hands to lift or move objects. An Occupational Safety and Health Administration study revealed that 70 percent of workers experiencing hand injuries were not wearing gloves. The remaining 30 percent were making use of damaged, inadequate or inappropriate types of gloves for the job. Choose the right glove for the task at hand and inspect it thoroughly before use.

Wash Carefully

Use warm, not hot, water to wash hands, and use a facility-approved, water-based moisturizer to protect against skin irritation from frequent washing. If necessary, avoid latex gloves and use oil-based moisturizers under cotton gloves at home to treat severely irritated skin.

Be Cautious of Sharp Objects

Utilize the correct safety procedures when working around scalpels, needles and other sharp objects. Never attempt to pick up broken glass or other sharp objects not meant for handling with bare hands; always use appropriate gloves or a broom.

Remove Rings

No matter how much sentimental value they carry, rings put your hands in grave danger on the job. They can very easily catch on moving parts and objects, resulting in lacerations, amputations or broken bones. Always remove rings before beginning work.

Stay Alert

Whenever you are using your hands to move an object, whether you are pushing it or carrying it, be sure the doorways and aisles in your path are wide enough for you to move through safely before you start the job. When you set a heavy object down, be aware of the placement of your hands. Always be alert for possible pinch points.

Speak Up

If you are unsure about any issue regarding the protection of your hands on the job, talk to your supervisor. At , we make your safety our first priority.

Safety Matters

Health Care

Provided by: Bitner Henry Insurance Group

Tips for Toxic Chemical Safety

Several chemicals that you are likely to encounter at , including glutaraldehyde, formaldehyde and disinfecting liquids, are hazardous to your health and can cause illness and injury if they are not handled correctly. Before you begin working with any chemical, identify its potential hazards, become familiar with how to best protect yourself and be aware of the procedures to follow if something goes wrong.

General Safety Precautions

The manufacturer's label and Safety Data Sheets (SDS) for each chemical you handle provide important information regarding hazards, the use of personal protective equipment (PPE), proper handling, transport, storage and disposal of chemicals. Each time you encounter a chemical, read this information and take the appropriate precautions. In addition, the following recommendations apply when working with any toxic chemical.

- Wear the appropriate PPE when handling chemicals. The two most common ways that chemicals enter the body are through the skin and through inhalation. PPE such as coveralls and respirators are designed to protect you.
- Use the least hazardous chemical option for the task at hand and prepare only the amount that is absolutely necessary for completing the job.
- Never eat, drink, smoke or apply cosmetics while working with chemicals.

- Make sure that the equipment used to apply chemicals is in good working order and does not have any leaks.
- Do not work alone.
- Ensure proper ventilation in the area where you will be using the chemical.
- Do not store chemicals in unlabeled containers, or those that previously held food, drink or other chemicals. Unexpected chemical reactions that release potentially toxic fumes can result.
- Wash your body thoroughly after using chemicals and before eating, drinking, smoking or using the restroom.

Exposure

Exposure to cleaning products usually occurs from inhalation of vapors or mists, or by skin or eye contact with the chemicals. The most common effect is irritation—pain and inflammation, sometimes accompanied by redness and swelling—of the skin, eyes or respiratory tract. The site and severity of the irritation depends on:

- The type of chemical used

- How the chemical was being used
- How the chemical came in contact with the body

If a co-worker is exposed to a toxic chemical, consult the SDS and the product label before taking action. The correct response to exposure is as important as immediate action. The best first aid for skin or eye contact is to wash the affected area with water for at least 10 minutes. For inhalation exposures, the person should be moved to an area of fresh air and medical attention should be sought if symptoms persist.

When to Get Help

If the injured or ill person is having trouble breathing, is having convulsions or is unconscious, provide the necessary first aid and seek emergency care.

When seeking care for a victim of exposure, keep the chemical container handy to accurately instruct the health care professional about the type of exposure the person has experienced.

Safety Matters

Health Care

Provided by: Bitner Henry Insurance Group

Using a Hoyer Lift for a Bed Transfer

As a health care employee, you may be responsible for lifting and repositioning patients—especially those who struggle with mobility. In particular, some patients will need assistance moving into and out of their beds. Without proper equipment and precautions in place, this process can lead to serious accidents and injuries among all parties involved. Fortunately, that's where Hoyer lifts can help.

Also known as a portable total-body lift or a patient lift, a Hoyer lift permits a patient to be transported from one place to another with minimal physical effort. Although these lifts can be useful, they must be operated correctly to be effective. Keep reading for more details on how these lifts work and the steps for using them safely during bed transfers.

How Hoyer Lifts Work

Depending on a patient's specific medical needs and room layout, a Hoyer lift can be on wheels, free-standing or attached to the wall or ceiling. Some lifts rotate, whereas others operate on a track system.

While there are several types of Hoyer lifts available (e.g., battery-powered, manual and electronic), they all leverage the same basic framework. First, a sling is placed underneath the patient and connected to a hydraulic arm. Once the patient is secured in the sling, the hydraulic arm lifts them into the air and moves them in the desired direction before lowering them to their destination.

Steps for Using Hoyer Lifts Safely

To use a Hoyer lift safely during a bed transfer, follow these steps:

- **Assess the patient.** Ensure the patient is fully alert and in the appropriate mental and physical state to be transferred. Don't move an agitated or resistant patient. Further, make sure to consistently communicate with the patient during every step of the transfer so they remain aware of what's happening.
- **Prepare the equipment and path.** Review the patient's medical condition and body measurements (e.g., height, weight and hip size) when selecting a sling; improperly sized equipment could harm the patient or cause them to slip out during the transfer. Be sure the lift is in good condition by assessing its battery (if applicable), lift controls, attachments and safety features before use. Refrain from using damaged or worn equipment. Position the lift at the correct height and establish a clear path for it to move freely to the destination.
- **Attach the sling.** Roll the patient onto their side and center the sling beneath their spine. Keep the sling's leg straps flat, and don't let them twist or fold as the patient rolls back on top of the sling. Securely attach the sling to the lift's hydraulic arm per the manufacturer's instructions.

- **Move the patient.** Slowly lift the patient, making sure their weight is evenly distributed and they remain comfortable. Upon reaching the destination, lower the patient and use your hands to place their body in the correct position. Carefully release the patient's weight, detach the sling from the hydraulic arm per the manufacturer's instructions and remove the sling from the patient's body without hurting their skin.
- **Prioritize safety.** Conduct ongoing equipment and safety checks before, during and after using the lift. If the lift loses power or otherwise fails amid the transfer, use the emergency release to lower the patient and ask other employees to help move the patient manually. Report any issues with the lift to your supervisor.

Conclusion

Using Hoyer lifts properly can make all the difference in conducting safe and successful bed transfers, keeping both you and your patients protected from potential injuries.

Talk to your supervisor for more information on lift safety.

Safety Matters

Health Care

Provided by: Bitner Henry Insurance Group

Using NIOSH-approved Respirators

Working in the health care industry can be dangerous—sometimes even breathing the air can be risky. The airborne transmission of infectious diseases is a major occupational hazard for health care workers.

This risk exposure is not just limited to workers involved in direct patient care. Anyone working near patients infected with airborne-transmissible diseases is at risk. Workers are required to wear respiratory protection that offsets this risk. However, you must ensure your respirators are approved by the National Institute of Occupational Health (NIOSH); otherwise, you are not protected against the full range of airborne risks.

What are Respirators?

Respirators are specifically designed to provide respiratory protection by forming a tight seal against wearers' skin and filtering out airborne particles, including pathogens. The most common respirator is the N95, the number signifying that it filters at least 95% of airborne particles.

Wearing a respirator is required in the necessary environments, but just wearing one is not enough. For example, the respirator may not fit, or you may be wearing it incorrectly. Comply with these five respirator rules to ensure you, your patients and your co-workers are protected:

- Follow the guidance of your organization's respirator protection program.
- Be sure you are using a NIOSH-approved

respirator.

- Get fit-tested every year.
- Know how to put on and take off the specific brand and model of respirator you are using.
- Know how to use the respirator safely and effectively.

Respirators vs. Surgical Masks

Although they look similar, respirators and surgical masks are very different. Respirators protect health care workers from airborne particles, but cannot protect against gases, vapor or sprays, and provide only scant protection against liquid splashes.

Surgical masks, on the other hand, help block large particle droplets, splashes, sprays and splatter from reaching the nose and mouth. They do not fit snugly on the wearer's face and they do not filter the air. Surgical masks protect the patient from the health care worker, while the reverse is true for respirators.

Surgical N95 respirators are a synthesis of both surgical masks and respirators. They provide the benefits of both—the respiratory protection of a respirator and the liquid protection of a surgical mask.

Ensure Your Respirator is Approved

All respirators in health care settings must be approved by NIOSH. Unfortunately, there are counterfeit respirators that bear NIOSH markings. To ensure your respirator is authentic and approved by NIOSH, look for the approval number on the product, packaging or user's instructions. The approval number, also called a TC number, will be in the following format: TC-84A-xxxx. The last four numbers will depend on your respirator's filter class (N, P or R) and filter efficiency level (95, 99 or 100). Find your respirator's TC number in the [table of NIOSH-approved respirators](#).

Here at , your safety is top priority. Make sure your respirator is fully functioning and NIOSH-approved. That way you're protecting yourself and making the workplace safer for everyone.

Safety Matters

Health Care

Provided by: Bitner Henry Insurance Group

Vehicle Safety Precautions for Emergency Responders

Emergency vehicle drivers are an essential component in saving the lives of others, as they are responsible for driving the truck that carries all equipment and personnel necessary to assist those in need. If drivers cannot successfully get the vehicle to an emergency scene, personnel cannot help civilians and/or protect property.

In order to deliver both personnel and equipment, drivers must always have safety in mind. In addition, emergency vehicle drivers must use a high standard of care for the general public who are also using the road by trying to reduce the risk of injury to others.

Vehicle Inspections

Before entering the vehicle and starting it up, walk around the entire truck to make sure that all equipment is secured, all compartment doors are securely shut and all obstructions are safely moved out of the way.

- Inspect all four sides and the top of the vehicle.
- Verify clearance on the right and rear of the vehicle with the person riding in the officer position. This check should be done before moving in both emergency and non-emergency situations.

- Once in the vehicle, wear your safety belt.

Warning Devices and Responding to Emergencies

When responding to an emergency:

- Turn on all audible and visual warning devices. Also remember that though these items are turned on, the general public still may not give you the clearance that you need quickly.
- Recognize that warning devices are only a

request for the right-of-way as opposed to a guarantee that you have the rule of the road.

- Be aware of how close you are to other vehicles and pedestrians, and make sure to allow a safe following distance. Specifically, allow one second of following distance for every 10 feet of vehicle length for speeds less than 40 mph, and one additional second for speeds 10 mph over 40 mph.
- Drive as close to the posted speed limit as possible when responding to an emergency, and never exceed 10 mph over the posted limit. There are many conditions that warrant slower speeds:
 - Slippery roads
 - Inclement weather
 - Poor visibility
 - Heavy traffic
 - Sharp curves and uneven surfaces

Intersections

Many accidents occur within or near intersections, so as you approach one, exercise extreme caution.

Uncontrolled Intersections: Do the following when approaching:

1. Intersections that do not have a control device in place (stop sign, yield sign or traffic signal) in the

direction that you are traveling, or

2. Traffic control signal that is green as your vehicle is approaching:
 - Conduct a full scan of the intersection looking for potential dangers in all four directions. Some hazards may include drivers turning right on a red light, pedestrians walking or drivers traveling at excessive speeds.
 - If you detect any dangers, slow down immediately.
 - If you need to change the siren speed, do so no more than 200 feet from the intersection.
 - Avoid using the opposite lane of traffic to pass other vehicles, if possible.
 - Always be prepared to stop, especially if another vehicle does not yield to you.

Controlled Intersections: Come to a complete stop when approaching intersections controlled by a stop or yield sign or yellow or red traffic light. Also, remember the following:

- Do not rely on sirens or lights to clear traffic.
- Before entering the intersection, scan the area for potential hazards and passing options.
- Confirm that all vehicles around you are stopped before proceeding.

Railroad Intersections: When approaching a railroad crossing:

- Turn off sirens and air horns.
- Operate the vehicle at an idle speed.
- Open the windows and listen for a train.

Non-emergency Response Situations

When responding to a non-emergency, follow all normal motor vehicle regulations without using your audible or visible devices.

Backing Up

Backing is a difficult task, as you cannot see around the vehicle as easily as you can in a smaller, personal vehicle. Whenever possible, avoid backing up an emergency vehicle. If you must back up, opt for one of the two following options:

- Have a spotter stand behind the vehicle in a position where the driver can see them at all times. Then, the spotter should direct the driver as they back up. If the driver loses sight of the spotter at any time, they should stop the vehicle immediately.
- If using a spotter is impossible, perform a complete vehicle inspection as previously described to assure that no people or objects are in the way of the vehicle's intended path. Then, back up slowly.

Preventing Vehicle Rollovers

If you were to run off the road in an emergency vehicle, you must exercise specific precautions to avoid a rollover:

- Remove your foot from the gas pedal and allow the vehicle to slow.
- Apply the brake slowly, allow the vehicle to slow naturally and downshift to bring it to a complete stop.
- Use soft shoulder conditions to your advantage to maintain control.
- Once you have successfully stopped the vehicle, slowly steer it back on the road in a lower gear and with light acceleration.

Hose Loading

Hose loading on a fire truck can be a dangerous task if you are unsure of where other personnel are located or are not using sound judgment. Here are some recommendations for safe hose loading:

- Have a spotter stand in a position with an unobstructed view of the hose loading and within ear shot of the person loading the hose.
- Remove all non-emergency traffic from the area before loading the hose.
- Drive the fire truck in a forward direction only and at no more than 5 mph.
- Avoid standing in the hose bed while the vehicle is moving.

Safety Matters

Health Care

Provided by: Bitner Henry Insurance Group

Working with Chemicals? We've Got You Covered

There are likely many times throughout your day that you either handle or are exposed to dangerous chemicals. is dedicated to ensuring your safety, so we have a Hazard Communication Program in place. The goal of this program is to make you aware of chemicals you may be in contact with on the job and to help you understand the potential hazards of those chemicals. This education is required by the Occupational Safety & Health Act (OSHA). This knowledge is equally important to us so that we can all ensure the safety of our patients.

Safety Data Sheets

One important key to a Hazard Communication Program is the Safety Data Sheet (SDS). This sheet tells you everything you need to know about a specific chemical, including the following:

- The health hazards associated with the chemical
- How flammable the product is, and at what temperature it may ignite
- The reactivity of the chemical with water or other agents and how likely it is to explode
- What personal protective equipment (PPE) is needed to work with the chemical

With information broken down into 16 different categories, the SDS form can be lengthy, which

is why we also provide SDS Information Review Forms for the chemicals you may encounter in our facility. Though you should also know where the complete SDSs are, and should refer to them when specific details are needed, the Information Review Form is an easy-access, user-friendly version of a chemical's essential information.

Other important aspects of the Hazard Communication Program include the following:

- Accurate labeling of containers that contain chemicals, including warning labels when applicable.
- Ensuring that labels are not removed.
- Employee training in accordance with your job duties relating to chemicals.

Important Questions to Ask

Through our Hazard Communication Program, every employee should learn the following information:

- What chemicals might I handle or be exposed to on the job?
- Where are the SDSs kept for the chemicals I am exposed to?
- What kinds of hazards do I face when I

use, or misuse, a particular chemical?

- Do I understand the emergency procedures to follow in the event of a spill?
- How do I ensure that patients are protected when working with chemicals?

Your Responsibilities

Though it is our goal to teach you the information you need, it is your responsibility to learn it and ask questions if necessary. You should follow all safety procedures when working around chemicals, keep in mind potential hazards and always wear appropriate PPE. Also keep patients in mind, and make sure to take appropriate precautions to keep them safe.

It may seem overwhelming to learn about all the chemicals you may handle or be exposed to, but it is important knowledge that all workers should have. Always be sure to ask questions or reference the appropriate SDS if you forget or have yet to learn about a certain chemical. Failing to do so could result in an extremely hazardous situation for you, your co-workers and our patients.

SDS Information Review Form (Convert information from the chemical's SDS)

Chemical common name: _____ Review date: _____

Also known as: _____

Signal Word (SDS section 2)	
Hazard Classification (SDS section 2)	
Hazard Statement(s) (SDS section 2)	
Protective Equipment to be Used (SDS section 8)	
First Aid Measures (SDS section 4)	
Firefighting Measures (SDS section 5)	

Circle Appropriate Hazard Pictograms and Hazard Type (SDS section 2):

 Health Hazard	 Flame	 Exclamation Mark
• Carcinogen • Mutagenicity • Reproductive toxicity • Respiratory sensitizer • Target organ toxicity • Aspiration toxicity	• Flammables • Pyrophorics • Self-heating • Emits flammable gas • Self-reactives • Organic peroxides	• Irritant (skin and eye) • Skin sensitizer • Acute toxicity (harmful) • Narcotic effects • Respiratory tract irritant
 Gas Cylinder	 Corrosion	 Exploding Bomb
• Gases under pressure	• Skin Corrosion/ burns • Eye damage • Corrosive to metals	• Explosives • Self-reactives • Organic peroxides

 Flame Over Circle	 Environment (Non-mandatory)	 Skull and Crossbones
• Oxidizers	• Aquatic toxicity	• Acute toxicity (fatal or toxic)