

Stop and Ask for Help: Avoidable Injuries Cost \$3 Million in 2016

A police officer physically pushing a snowbound vehicle from the roadway. A public works employee lifting two 80-pound bags of concrete. A firefighter lifting a downed light pole following a motor vehicle accident. What do all these claim scenarios have in common? All resulted in significant injuries and could have been prevented if the employee simply asked for help.

According to IRMA's 2016 workers' compensation claims data, the second most severe cause of injuries was having inadequate help while performing job duties. While inadequate help accounted for only 11% of all causes of workers' injuries, the severity of the injuries cost nearly a quarter of all workers' compensation claims costs incurred in 2016.

These type of overexertion injuries are the most common and preventable workplace injuries not only within IRMA's membership but nationwide. Overexertion injuries includes injuries related to lifting, pushing, pulling, holding, and carrying and can affect multiple parts of the body – from shoulders and backs to hands and knees. Injuries range in severity from simple strains or sprains to career ending injuries.

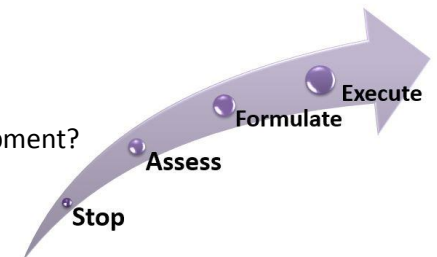
Outside of emergency situations, employees should be instructed to slow down and determine the next best steps to safely perform the task-at-hand. By encouraging staff to work S.A.F.E., you're decreasing the risk of injury with little to no time wasted.

Stop – Slow down, take a moment before starting the task

Assess – Analyze how to safely perform the task, do you need help or equipment?

Formulate – Choose a plan of action and inform co-workers

Execute – Execute plan



In addition to asking for help from co-workers or other operating departments (depending on the task), employees should be trained on the proper ways to lift and be mindful of body ergonomics as well as reminded to utilize equipment targeted at eliminating exertion hazards. Visit IRMA's website to view training options from Tool Box Talks to Video Streaming which will remind employees to continually put their safety first.

Consider applying for one of our grants targeted at reducing exertion injuries. There are three grants which may assist your department in achieving a lower incident of overexertion injuries: Injury Prevention Grant, Fire Service Equipment Program and Lift Assist Equipment Grant. The Injury Prevention Grant offers reimbursement on education for proper lifting techniques while the Fire Service Equipment Program and Lift Assist Equipment Program offers reimbursement of industry tools targeted reducing lifting injuries. For a complete list and description of our grant opportunities, click [here](#). Additionally, members can take advantage of our pooled pricing on services and equipment. For more information on pooled pricing click [here](#).