



# Self Insurers Fund *Bulletin*

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## Back Pain and Work-Loss Days

by John Iannace

**A**ccording to the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons, after the common cold, back pain is the leading reason adults under 45 years of age stay home from work. Back pain results in about 83 million lost work days each year. It's one of the most common work-related injuries, especially among those working in physically demanding jobs, and the leading cause of job-related disability and work limitations in those less than 45 years of age.

Back pain is a leading cause of work-loss days as well as work limitations. Adults with back pain spend almost 200 million days in bed a year.

Even routine office work can worsen back pain, especially if you have bad workplace habits (for example, slouching over your desk, not taking regular breaks, using a chair that doesn't give enough support) or your workspace isn't well designed.



### Proper Lifting Technique

**The Squat Lift**—Ideally, objects should be lifted by way of the squat lift. The knees are bent so that low back stress is minimized and the back is relatively straight. While this may not seem as easy or natural as simply bending forward at the waist it certainly minimizes the lower spinal stress which can lead to many injuries including disc herniation. Also, keep the feet approximately shoulder width apart for stability during the lift and be sure to keep the object as close to your body as possible. The farther the object is away from the body the greater the stress on the spine.

**Repetitive and Heavy Lifting**—Even when appropriate lifting methods are used, repetitive stress injuries to the spine will occur if objects are too heavy or lifting is done continuously to the point that the spinal musculature becomes fatigued. Never lift heavy objects alone. Ask for assistance with lifting wherever possible. Never lift continuously to the point that spinal muscles become fatigued. This will greatly increase the odds of sustaining spinal injury.

**Always Remember**—Be sure to keep objects as close to the body as possible during the lifting and carrying of objects. Where possible, try to reduce the weight of the object being lifted or carried so you can perform several smaller safe lifts, rather than one heavy unsafe lift. Never lift any object that causes pain. ●



The South Carolina Home Builders Self Insurers Fund (SCHBSIF) provides a quality workers' compensation program for qualified builders and subcontractor members of the HBA of SC. The Fund

offers a cost-effective, stable and reliable workers' compensation program.

Designed by builders for builders, it also provides more effective control over workers' compensation costs and claims, which result in a direct savings for member companies. The SCHBSIF's workers' compensation program is available statewide through an extensive network of independent agents.

You may also contact the SCHBSIF office directly.

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# OSHA Fall Protection Rules Change

**O**SHA has announced that it has rescinded the Interim Fall Protection Guidelines for Residential Construction (STD 03-00-001). Due to the confusion about these guidelines, the National Association of Home Builders was one of the organizations supporting this change. Residential builders will now have to meet the same fall protection requirements as commercial builders. If there is a fall hazard of six feet or more conventional fall protection (guardrails, covers, safety harness and lanyard system, or fall protection nets) is required.

There are exceptions if the employer can demonstrate that the use of fall protection is infeasible or would create a greater hazard. If it is infeasible or less safe to use conventional fall protection, the employer must have a written, site specific, program describing what steps will be taken to reduce fall hazards. All exposed employees must be trained in this program. Access must be restricted to those who have been trained and are following the alternative safe work practices described in the written program. Most, if not all of these changes were already in effect in South Carolina, they will now apply in all states. If you have questions about this change or any other safety issues, contact Danny Dilworth, SCHBSIF Risk Control and Safety Manager, at (803) 309-9603. ●



## Turnover and Training

by Danny Dilworth

**O**ne of the consequences of the continued slow pace of work in the housing industry is increased turnover of workers. Companies are often unable to retain trained workers due to the lack of available work. When builders and subcontractors have work they often have to find employees at the start of the job. This results in the hiring of workers who may be skilled but are unfamiliar with the company and SIF safety policies. New workers, especially those who are unfamiliar with safe work practices, are more likely to be injured on the job. It is important that companies take the time to familiarize their workers with the safe work practices that are expected on the job.

Providing safety training for workers will reduce the potential for them to be injured on the job. By doing so it increases productivity and helps to reduce the cost of insurance and the other direct and indirect costs of worker injury. Training can be in meetings, on the job, or a combination of the two. If you are a member of the SCHBSIF and would like assistance in providing safety training for your new or current employees, contact Danny Dilworth, SCHBSIF Risk Control and Safety Manager, at (803) 309-9603. ●