



THE CRASIF CONNECTION

Question: Is there a maximum amount of weight that an employee can be required to lift?

Answer: There are no MIOSHA/OSHA standards that address the amount of weight that an employee can lift.

Although there is no maximum weight limit that employees are allowed to lift, one of the tools used to determine the extent of a lifting hazard is the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) lifting equation which is designed to evaluate various kinds of two handed manual lifting tasks.

This equation is used to calculate the Recommended Weight Limit (RWL) which is the weight of the load that nearly all healthy workers could perform in a specific set of task conditions over a substantial period of time without an increased risk of developing lifting-related low back pain.

There are several conditions, if present during a lift, that would make the use of the NIOSH lifting equation inappropriate to use to determine the RWL. Some of the conditions that would make the lifting equation inappropriate to use include one handed lifts, lifting while seated or kneeling, lifting while carrying, pushing or pulling.

In essence, the NIOSH lifting equation begins at 51 pounds (23 kg) and conditions involved with the lift will lower the RWL.

The factors accounted for in the NIOSH lifting equation include:

- the horizontal location of the load,
- the vertical location of the load,
- the vertical travel distance involved with the lift, and
- the frequency of the lift

Although the NIOSH lifting equation begins at 51 pounds, again that is not considered to be the maximum weight an employee can lift. Under optimal conditions such as a low frequency of lifts, good coupling, and good posture, a greater amount of weight can be safely lifted.

Occupational Safety Expertise

MIOSHA safety consultants and compliance officers also have wide ranging experiences to share. Examples of recent safety enhancements as a result of consultations and inspections include:

- Established a program to inspect all cables, rigging, and pulling equipment.
- Cleared a fire exit door.
- Shared inspection results with employees, trained them to recognize the hazards identified in the inspection and implemented daily checks by employees.
- Installed safety railing on mezzanine level.
- Added training at the machine in addition to PowerPoint training.

Please visit our web site at CRASIF.org. Our spring seminars will soon be posted. Schedule your employees to attend. Call if we can be of assistance in managing your risk.

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