

# safety matters

Construction  
Toolbox Talks for

From your safety partners at Cool Insuring Agency, Inc.

## Sheet Metal Safety

We often encounter sheet metal tasks on the job site, whether it is installing a metal roof, working on an HVAC system or any number of other tasks. Working with sheet metal puts a lot of strain on your body, especially from reaching or bending in awkward positions and using heavy-duty tools to cut, bend or fasten the metal. These strenuous tasks can cause injuries. However, there are various things you can do to reduce your risk of injury and remain healthy on the job.

One of the most beneficial precautions you can take before starting your workday is to warm up your body and stretch, much like an athlete would before a race or a game. Start by walking or marching in place for five minutes. Then, do several arm circles followed by slowly stretching your legs, arms, shoulders and knees. If your muscles are warm and loose at the beginning of your day, you will be less likely to sustain an injury during your more physically demanding tasks.

### Safety Tips

Once you're done stretching, it's time to get to work. Here are some easy safety alternatives that reduce the risk of injury:

- Keep your wrists straight by using an angled tool or re-position the material to avoid bending at the wrist.
- Create a workbench that allows you to stand upright as opposed to kneeling to do tasks.
- Center yourself and move as close as possible to get work done overhead. Do

not try to reach and extend a hand tool far away from your body.

- Choose power tools over hand tools whenever possible to avoid excess strain.
- Change body positions frequently and alternate tasks to give muscle groups a break.
- Increase the diameter on bucket handles by adding padding to lessen your grip and the strain on your hands.
- Bring loads close to your body when attempting to pick them up.
- Use mechanical aids and ask a fellow employee for assistance in carrying heavy loads.

### Lacerations

As a sheet metal worker, you also run the risk of getting dangerous cuts. In fact, these are the most common injuries suffered by those in your field, according to the Electronic Library of Construction Occupational Safety and Health (eLCOSH).

Many workers have lost fingers and hands during everyday tasks. It is wise to wear gloves while working with sheet metal. Though gloves do reduce your dexterity and the ability to move your fingers easily, they will prevent these types of dangerous injuries.

**Sheet metal tasks can take a toll on your body—follow these ergonomic tips to prevent injury.**

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## **Warning Signs of Injury**

Tell a supervisor if you experience the following symptoms:

- Constant fatigue
- Cold hands
- Swelling
- Numbness or shooting pains
- Tingling
- Changes in skin color
- Loss of sensation

You may need to seek medical attention or switch to a different task until your injury subsides.