



**Division 08** **Health and Safety**

**Chapter 02 – Back Injury Reduction and Lifting Policy**

February 2009

**POLICY**

This General Order shall establish a policy for lifting and carrying patients and equipment with the goal of reducing back injuries.

**DEFINITIONS**

N/A

**PROCEDURES**

**Prime Back Injury Conditions**

- Carrying up or down more than five stairs.
- Cramped/tight quarters, restricted movement.
- Unusual lifting positions or conditions.
- Lift, carry around.
- Lifting or carrying over icy areas.
- Carrying over unimproved terrain/inclines.
- Carrying over a distance that would take longer than one minute.
- Lifting or carrying a violent or thrashing patient.
- Any patient weighing more than 225 pounds.
- Any condition that the two-person crew evaluates as an unsafe lifting and carrying situation.

**Emergency Medical Service (EMS) Incidents**

Use of the cot to remove a patient from any structure where the patient is not at ground

level should be considered only after all other alternatives have been eliminated. Those alternatives may include, but are not limited to, stair chairs, reeves stretchers, or other patient removal devices.

*COT LIFTING IS THE PRIMARY CAUSE OF DEPARTMENTAL BACK INJURIES, THEREFORE, IT SHOULD BE LIFTED THE LEAST NUMBER OF TIMES POSSIBLE ON EACH INCIDENT.*

Certain items have an approximate standard weight, which should be considered when lifting a patient:

- Stretcher 125 lbs
- Life-Pack 12 25 lbs
- "E" Oxygen Cylinder 16 lbs
- Suction Unit 4 lbs
- Aid Bag 25 lbs
- Drug Box 30 lbs

Add the weight of the patient to the items listed above and you will find the total lifted weight.

When the total lifted weight exceeds 225lbs., and a "prime back injury condition" exists, a minimum of three people will be required. A four person, four-corner carry is optimal in this situation.

A two-person crew will require assistance for any patient weighing greater than 225lbs., even where no "prime back injury condition" exists. A minimum of four people shall be assembled before moving the patient.



When assistance is requested, it will be up to the discretion of the station officer-in-charge to determine what apparatus/vehicle will be sent. The number of personnel should be based on information from the unit making the request.

When unloading patients at medical facilities, the need for additional assistance may be evaluated by the officer-in-charge of the ALS/BLS unit. Requests for assistance, if required, may be made to other fire department personnel at the facility, medical facility personnel, or via the Bureau of Fire/Rescue Communications.

**General Rules for Lifting and Carrying**

Objects weighing more than 60 pounds will be lifted by two people whenever possible.

Whenever possible (a smooth flat surface) the stretcher should be wheeled, if this will not affect patient care.

When sufficient personnel are on the scene, a four-person, four-corer lift and carry should be used under any condition.

Two personnel should be used when utilizing a Stryker Power Pro to place a patient into the ambulance/medic unit or remove the patient from the unit. One person should lift at each corner of the foot end of the stretcher.

Facts to remember:

- Know the weight of your patient and equipment.
- Know your capabilities and those of your partner.
- Have a plan and communicate it. Problem solve ahead of time, determine which partner will lead.

- Keep weight as close to your body as possible.
- Keep your back in a locked-in position and do not twist.
- Keep your back straight -clear your path.
- Bend from the hips, not the waist -use a spotter on stairs, uneven surfaces.
- Do not hyperextend the back -use leg muscles to lift

**Exceptional Situations**

Under certain conditions, exceptions to this policy will be at the discretion of the personnel on the scene:

- Life-threatening and/or emergency situations, i.e., priority one patients
- Any unusual situation where waiting at the scene for help to arrive could be detrimental to you or your patient:
  - Stay in the most balanced position possible to aid in handling load shifts.
  - Exhale during exertion, avoid straining.
  - Avoid hurrying.

**REFERENCES**

N/A

**FORMS/ATTACHMENTS**

N/A