



PAEC SAFETY NEWS

March 2006

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WEBSITES FOR SAFETY INFORMATION:

- National Safety Council: <http://www.nsc.org>
- U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission: <http://www.cpsc.gov>
- School Bus Fleet: <http://www.schoolbusfleet.com>
- Occupational Safety and Health Administration: <http://www.osha.gov>

WORKERS COMPENSATION:

Workers Compensation accidents per district, as of January 31, 2006:

Calhoun: 10	Franklin: 12	Gulf: 6
Hamilton: 10	Holmes: 11	Jackson: 24
Jefferson: 12	Liberty: 3	Madison: 13
Wakulla: 18	Walton: 31	Washington: 19

ACCIDENTS:

These are some of the most recent Notice of Injuries that have been submitted:

- EE fell and hit head on desk.
- EE running while playing soccer with JV/Varsity soccer students after school and heard a pop from left calf.
- EE was picking up a pan of meat out of the steamer, and hurt left wrist.
- EE slipped on steps of the bus as she walked off of the bus.
- EE bent over to release door stop at top of steps. Fell down steps while on the way up to normal standing position.

TRAINING TOPICS: Back Pain

Back pains are among mankind's earliest and most enduring afflictions. It has been estimated that two-thirds of industrial workers, and more than half of all office workers, have suffered at least one back injury by age 65. About 85 percent of the patients one occupational health doctor sees for back problems have strained muscles in their "lumbar" region—the lower back. Lower back pain, he says, is usually set off by a specific movement at a specific moment in time. Lifting, falling, or trying to catch or break the fall of an object are the most common actions that cause such an injury. At that instant, the person may feel a snap, a popping sensation, nothing at all, or immediate agony. Being in a *hurry* is a major element in back injury cases, this occupational health expert has found. If a person would just take the time to get a forklift instead of trying to pick up the too-heavy object, or get the ladder instead of just reaching for something too high, a possible injury could probably be avoided.

Understanding your spine can also help. Constructed of 24 connected segments of bone and cartilage called vertebrae, it provides structural stability for the body. Spongy discs between the vertebrae cushion the bones while also bonding them together and providing the mobility that allows twisting, bending, and flexing movements. Also holding the vertebrae together are muscles and ligaments. Within the bones and protected by them is the spinal cord, the control center of the nervous system. If the springy disc material between the bones of the spine loses some of its bounce—which can happen simply as part of the aging process—then the stress of some particular movement may cause the disc to bulge or even break, with spongy tissue spilling out. This "herniated" disc can press on an adjacent nerve, causing pain, numbness, tingling, or painful muscle spasm.

Here are some precautions that can help protect your back from injury:

- Follow the safe lifting practices we've stressed so often.
- Sit and stand upright without slouching.
- Minimize stress on the lower back by avoiding overweight.
- Sleep on your back, with a cushion under the knees, or on your side

- Don't maintain one position for a long time—take a break.

Conditioning exercise is also a part of good back pain prevention. Your goals are to improve flexibility of the back (swimming and walking are great for this) and to strengthen both back and stomach muscles, to provide proper back support.

Here's what doctors advise for those who do have an injury that results in acute back pain: Stop. Get into bed for the first terribly painful period. You may want to use ice to reduce swelling or heat to ease muscles. Anti-inflammatory medication or muscle relaxers given to you by your doctor will help muscle spasms, too. Add a board underneath a too-soft mattress. In from one to five days, you should be able to move again, although in easy ways. In fact, it's important that you do begin to move at this point, to increase flexibility and strength. Allow discomfort and your good sense to tell you how far you should go. Long-term recovery may depend on your physician's help and adhering to the preventive measures already mentioned. Doesn't this emphasize how much smarter—and more comfortable—you'll be by taking those preventive steps in the first place?

(Based on information from the American Physical Therapy Association.)