

**PUBLIC ALLIANCE INSURANCE  
COVERAGES FUND**

**SUPERVISOR'S GUIDE  
TO...**

**MOVING THINGS**

Moving materials and objects are one of the most common activities of any department or entity. Everything gets moved at one time or another and, sometimes more than once. How we move these things is very important if we are to keep our workforce free from injury. Step One in avoiding an injury to one of your staff when moving things is **PROPER PLANNING**.

Planning starts with knowing what has to be moved and to where. It also includes when does it have to be moved? Do you have to move a five pound box a short distance and put it up on a shelf, or is it a six hundred pound crate that has to be moved to another location? While your training and experience will automatically take over and determine how the task is to be done, it is always well to re-visit what you have decided so you can double check that automatic plan.

Your plan should include:

## **WHAT ARE YOU DEALING WITH?**

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- **IS THE MATERIAL/OBJECT TO BE HANDLED COMPACT OR LARGE AND AWKWARD?**
- **DOES THE MATERIAL OR OBJECT HAVE AN UNUSAL SHAPE THAT WOULD MAKE IT HARD TO HANDLE?**
- **HOW MUCH DOES THE MATERIAL/OBJECT WEIGH?**
- **CAN THE MATERIAL OR OBJECT BE LIFTED IN A STANDARD WAY?**
- **WILL THE MATEIAL OR OBJECT HAVE TO BE MOVED MORE THAN ONCE IN ORDER TO COMPLETE THE TASK?**
- **WILL THE MATERIAL OR OBJECT REMAIN STABLE OR CAN IT SHIFT WHILE BEING MOVED?**
- **IF IT IS LARGE AND HEAVY, CAN THE MATERIAL OR OBJECT BE BROKEN DOWN INTO SMALLER PARTS TO EASE MOVEMENT?**
- **CAN A DIFFERENT SIZE CONTAINER BE USED SO THAT SMALLER AMOUNTS ARE MOVED AT ONE TIME?**
- **CAN THE MATERIAL OR OBJECT BE EASILY GRASPED AND LIFTED?**
- **IS IT SLIPPERY OR HARD TO HOLD ON TO?**
- **DOES THE OBJECT HAVE HANDLES?**
- **WILL GLOVES BE REQUIRED WHILE MOVING OBJECT AND ARE THEY OF PROPER SIZE?**
- **IS THE OBJECT SO HEAVY THAT IT WILL REQUIRE PUSHING OR PULLING?**

## **MATERIAL OR OBJECT LOCATION**

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- **DO YOU KNOW THE EXACT LOCATION OF THE OBJECT OR MATERIAL THAT HAS TO BE MOVED?**

- **WHERE IS OBJECT OR MATERIAL NOW AND HOW DIFFICULT WILL IT BE TO REACH IT?**
- **IS THERE JUST ONE OBJECT OR MANY THAT HAVE TO BE MOVED?**
- **DOES ANYTHING ELSE HAVE TO BE MOVED BEFORE YOU CAN GAIN ACCESS TO THE MATERIAL OR OBJECT?**
- **IS THE OBJECT/MATERIAL ON A SHELF?**
- **IS THAT SHELF HIGH, LOW OR IN THE MIDDLE?**
- **IS THE SHELF DEEP OR SHALLOW?**
- **IS THE AREA WHERE THE OBJECT IS LOCATED CLEAR OR ARE THERE OTHER MATERIALS RESTRICTING ACCESS?**
- **ARE THERE OPERATIONS IN THE AREA THAT WILL INTERFERE WITH YOUR GETTING THE OBJECT/MATERIAL?**
- **IS THE OBJECT/MATERIAL OUTDOORS?**
- **IS THE OBJECT/MATERIAL ON A VEHICLE?**
- **IF OUTDOORS, WHAT ARE THE WEATHER CONDITIONS?**
- **HAVE PAST WEATHER CONDITIONS CREATED A DIFFICULT ENVIRONMENT FOR MOVING THE OBJECT/MATERIAL (ICE)?**
- **IF INDOORS, HOW IS THE LIGHTING IN THE AREA?**

**HOW THE MATERIAL OR OBJECT WILL BE MOVED**

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- **DOES SOMEONE HAVE TO MANUALLY LIFT THE MATERIAL/OBJECT TO MOVE IT?**
- **IS THIS A ONE-PERSON JOB OR IS MORE THAN ONE PERSON REQUIRED TO MOVE THE OBJECT/MATERIAL?**
- **DOES REACHING THE MATERIAL OR OBJECT REQUIRE ANY STRETCHING OR REACHING?**

- **DOES ANYTHING HAVE TO BE USED TO GAIN ACCESS TO THE MATERIAL/OBJECT (LADDER, PLATFORM, ETC.)?**
- **IF AT GROUND LEVEL CAN THE OBJECT/MATERIAL BE PUSHED OR PULLED RATHER THAN LIFTED?**
- **HOW FAR DO YOU HAVE TO MOVE THE MATERIAL/OBJECT?**
- **WHAT PATH OF TRAVEL WILL HAVE TO BE FOLLOWED AND IS IT FREE OF OBSTACLES?**
- **ARE THERE ANY CHANGES IN ELEVATION DURING TRAVEL?**
- **HOW IS THE HOUSEKEEPING IN THE AREA WHERE THE OBJECT OR MATERIAL IS LOCATED?**
- **HOW IS THE HOUSEKEEPING ALONG THE PATH OF TRAVEL?**
- **HOW IS THE HOUSEKEEPING IN THE AREA WHERE YOU WILL BE PLACING THE OBJECT/MATERIAL?**
- **DO PERSONNEL AT THE DELIVERY LOCATION KNOW YOU ARE COMING?**

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- **DO YOU NEED ANY MECHANICAL EQUIPMENT TO HELP YOU MOVE IT?**
- **IF MECHANICAL EQUIPMENT IS NEEDED, WHAT IS THE BEST AND EASIEST FOR THIS JOB?**
- **IS THAT NEEDED EQUIPMENT IN GOOD CONDITION & WELL MAINTAINED?**
- **WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME THE EQUIPMENT WAS INSPECTED BY YOU?**
- **IF THE NECESSARY EQUIPMENT IS NOT AVAILABLE, CAN IT BE BORROWED FROM ANOTHER SOURCE?**
- **IS THE EQUIPMENT ABOUT TO BE USED ERGONOMICALLY DESIGNED?**

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- **WILL A VEHICLE BE NEEDED TO TRANSPORT THE OBJECT OR MATERIAL?**
- **WILL THE VEHICLE HAVE TO BE LOADED BY HAND OR WITH THE USE OF MECHANICAL EQUIPMENT?**
- **IS THE VEHICLE IN GOOD CONDITION? WHEN WAS IT LAST INSPECTED?**
- **DOES THE VEHICLE HAVE A HYDRALIC LIFT GATE TO MAKE GETTING MATERIALS AND OBJECTS EASIER TO GET ON AND OFF?**

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- **IS THIS A JOB FOR ONE PERSON OR IS ADDITIONAL HELP NEEDED TO COMPLETE IT SAFELY?**
- **WHAT STEPS MUST THE INDIVIDUAL FOLLOW IN ORDER TO COMPLETE THE TASK SAFELY?**
- **IF MATERIAL HANDLING EQUIPMENT IS NECESSARY, DO THE PERSONNEL ASSIGNED TO DO THE JOB KNOW HOW TO USE IT?**
- **IS THIS A RUSH JOB OR CAN IT BE FITTED INTO THE NORMAL ROUTINE?**

- **HAVE THE PERSONNEL ASSIGNED HAD TRAINING ON HOW TO LIFT PROPERLY?**
- **ARE THE PERSONNEL ASSIGNED THE TASK AWARE THAT THEY CAN ASK FOR HELP?**
- **HAS ANYONE INVOLVED WITH THE OPERATION EVER SUFFERED A BACK INJURY BEFORE?**
- **IS ANYONE INVOLVED IN THE OPERATION ON LIGHT DUTY AT THE PRESENT TIME OR HAVE THEY BEEN IN THE PAST?**
- **ARE THE PEOPLE ASSIGNED TO THE TASK IN GOOD PHYSICAL CONDITION?**
- **ARE THE PEOPLE YOU ARE ASSIGNING CAPABLE OF COMPLETING THE TASK WITHOUT PROBLEM.**
- **DO YOU HAVE THE RIGHT PEOPLE WHO CAN DO THE JOB AND DO YOU HAVE ENOUGH PEOPLE?**
- **CAN YOU GET SOMEONE ELSE TO MOVE THE MATERIAL OR OBJECT FOR YOU (TRANSFER THE RISK TO AN OUTSIDE CONTRACTOR)?**

Once you have thought the job through you need to pass your plan onto the people tasked with the assignment. This an all-important step that will either spell success or lead to failure and perhaps a back injury. **GOOD COMMUNICATION** with your people cannot be underestimated.

You must tell people what they are up against. For instance the simple process of moving dirt. How much dirt do you have to move? That is a very important question because the answer tells you what you should use. Terms such as, “a small amount”, “a lot”, “a small truck load”, etc. should never be used when assigning work to your people. Those terms leave too much room for interpretation. A small amount

of dirt to a supervisor may mean less than a ton while to the person who has to do the job, it may mean a wheelbarrow full. You start out by stating as accurately as possible just how much dirt is going to be moved. Communication is a very difficult task for even the most experienced supervisor and the use of general terms or vague references to the work only make matters worse.

When assigning work such as moving dirt indicate as close as you can the amount that has to be moved. You don't have to be exact, just in the ballpark. Instead of saying "We have some topsoil to spread", try and be more exact. "We have about four tons to spread around the building" is a better statement. Something more specific like that lets you begin your thinking on how it is to be done and enables the person assigned the work to do the same. It can make a difference.

Planning the work is probably the single most important step you can take to avoid injuries. By communicating how much dirt is going to have to be moved you have already generally signaled what type of equipment will be needed.

- **DID YOU PERSONNALLY ASSIGN THE WORK TO BE DONE?**
- **DID YOU GIVE SPECIFIC INSTRUCTIONS AS TO HOW YOU WANTED THE WORK DONE?**
- **DID YOU REMIND YOUR STAFF OF HOW EASILY BACKS COULD BE INJURED?**
- **DID YOU REVIEW THE PROPER METHOD OF LIFTING WITH THE STAFF?**
- **DID YOU REMIND THEM THAT IT IS EASIER TO PUSH THAN TO PULL AN OBJECT?**



- **DID YOU INDICATE HOW MUCH TIME WAS AVAILABLE FOR THE WORK?**
- **DID YOU INDICATE WHAT YOU SAW AS PROBLEMS WITH REGARD TO COMPLETION OF THE TASK?**
- **DID YOU ASK FOR FEEDBACK ON HOW TO ACCOMPLISH THE TASK?**
- **DID YOU INDICATE WHAT EQUIPMENT SHOULD BE USED AND REVIEW HOW IT SHOULD BE USED PROPERLY?**
- **ARE THE ASSIGNED PERSONNEL QUALIFIED TO USE THIS EQUIPMENT?**
- **DID YOU STRESS TO ASSIGNED PERSONNEL THE NEED TO INSPECT THE EQUIPMENT TO ENSURE IT WAS IN GOOD CONDITION?**
- **DID YOU INSTRUCT THE STAFF NOT TO EXCEED WEIGHT LIMITS WHEN LIFTING AND WHEN TO SEEK HELP?**
- **IF BACK BELTS ARE BEING USED DID YOU INSTRUCT STAFF TO ONLY TIGHTEN THEM WHEN ACTUALLY LIFTING?**

**WHERE IS THE MATERIAL/OBJECT GOING TO BE MOVED TO?**

- **HAS THE FINAL DESTINATION OF THE MATERIAL/OBJECT BEEN MADE READY TO RECEIVE?**
- **IS THE AREA CLEAR OR WILL IT HAVE TO BE CLEARED WHEN THE LOAD ARRIVES?**
- **DO THEY KNOW WHEN YOU ARE DELIVERING THE OBJECT/MATERIAL?**
- **WILL HELP BE AVAILABLE WHEN THE MATERIAL/OBJECT ARRIVES?**
- **DO THEY HAVE THE NECESSARY EQUIPMENT TO UNLOAD THE OBJECT/MATERIAL?**