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INCIDENT ALERT

A worker was walking from a building when he noticed some scrap metal studs lying under some nearby scaffolding. He bent under the scaffold and walked to the studs, lifted them, then turned to take them to a nearby disposal bin. As he turned he felt a pain in his back. He reported the pain to his foreman who sent him to a nearby medical facility where he was diagnosed with a minor strain and placed on work restrictions. He was then released to return to restricted duty.

LESSONS LEARNED

The worker had stooped to an awkward position, then lifted the studs and turned, resulting in the back strain. Proper lifting and carrying technique training would have directed the worker to bend at the knees and turn to his direction of travel using his feet instead of twisting at waist level. An alternate method of removing the metal studs could have been to bend at the knees when he lifted up the studs and placed them outside the scaffold area where they could have been lifted then carried in an upright position. The third and best solution is to place waste containers in an appropriate area and require their use so scrap and other materials would not accumulate under scaffolding.

This injury occurred on February 2 however it was not reported to us until March 30. Unfortunately the time lag resulted in confusing and missing information about the incident. The worker had already completed his tasks on the project and left the project site. Had this been reported in a timely fashion an accurate investigation could have been performed and additional lessons may have been brought to light.

ACTION ITEMS

1. Remind your contractor of the need for rapid and accurate reporting of incidents. Ask them to communicate this requirement to their subcontractors. Ask your contractor about their expectations for material handling. Ask how they manage waste materials on the project to avoid trash stockpiling around the work area. Ask how material handling and proper lifting techniques are addressed in the task planning process.

2. Watch for tasks that may result in similar injuries during your walk through. Are workers bending at the waist and/or and twisting when lifting materials? Are materials stockpiled under scaffolding?

3. Share this Incident Alert with your contractor and ask them to share it with their workers.

Distribution:  
All CPO Staff