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INCIDENT ALERT

A laborer was working as part of a crew placing concrete. The concrete placement was on the second floor of a building, and the crew had decided the best way to transport the concrete mix from the truck to the work location was by using a type of wheelbarrow commonly known as a “Georgia bucket”. These wheelbarrows are capable of carrying 1/10 yard of concrete or more, have wide handles and widely spaced wheels, and are uniquely designed for the task. The wheelbarrows were to be loaded at a site built loading dock and pushed up a ramp to a personnel and equipment elevator that would be taken to the second floor.

Toward the end of the task the laborer was pushing a load up the ramp and noticed a twinge in his lower back. He reported the injury to his foreman and drove to a local medical facility where he was examined and diagnosed with a lumbar strain. He was given a prescription for pain relievers and anti-inflammatory medicine and released to return to restricted duty.

LESSONS LEARNED

During the task planning effort the workers had chosen a method of concrete placement that has inherent risks. Using wheelbarrows for the task means more stress on a person’s body, particularly when pushing up a ramp. A safer method would have been to use a concrete pumping method to get the material to the second floor. They had chosen not to since the placement was approximately 7 yards of concrete and they felt the system would not have been as efficient. Having made that decision they had not recognized the need to restrict the load level in the wheelbarrows. With the effort to complete the job quickly they were transporting as much material per trip as they could. Reducing the load would have made pushing the wheelbarrow up the ramp less stressful and possibly eliminated the injury.

ACTION ITEMS

1. Ask your contractor about how they manage job hazard analysis and task planning for high energy fast paced jobs like concrete placement. Ask how workers are included in the task planning and job hazard analysis process. Ask how their workers are educated in the ergonomic risk factors associated with their tasks. Ask what considerations are given to these risk factors when deciding methods for material handling.

2. Watch for tasks that may result in similar injuries during your walk through. Are material carts loaded to a reasonably safe level? Do workers have to push heavy loads up and down ramps to get to their work area? Are better, safer, less risky methods for material movement available?

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

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