Safety Incident Alert #072208.1
Arm Injury

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INCIDENT ALERT

A carpenter was working in an attic space installing a 3/4” plywood subfloor. He was in the process of lifting a 4’ by 8’ sheet of plywood from a stack when he felt pain in his left forearm. He immediately reported the injury to his foreman and was transported to a nearby medical facility where he was diagnosed with a muscle strain and placed on restricted duty.

LESSONS LEARNED

During the incident investigation it was noted that improvements in the work practices could be made. The activity of lifting and carrying 4 by 8 by 3/4” plywood is a common practice among carpenters. The task planning effort by the crew could have taken into consideration the placement of the materials closer to the work area. Wheeled material carts can help with this effort. This would allow the work crew to move the sheets of plywood close to the area they were installing the plywood. Workers could then slide the sheet off the cart and into position rather than lifting and carrying an awkward load. Second, work assignment should include enough people to handle heavy loads like this one. Having more than one person moving the material could have reduced the potential for a muscle strain.

A sheet of plywood this size weighs approximately 75 pounds. The worker has been a carpenter for around 30 years. This type of activity wears on a person’s body, and we, as the construction industry, need to look at developing work practices that can minimize the potential for this type of injury.

ACTION ITEMS

1. Ask your contractor how the address improving work practices with an eye toward ergonomic risks. Ask how ergonomic risk factors are included in the job hazard analysis and task planning efforts.

2. Watch for situations that could result in a similar injury. Are workers carrying heavy and awkward loads? Are workers using material handling devices (such as carts) or are they attempting to “manhandle” materials?

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

Distribution:
All CPO Staff