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INCIDENT ALERT

An insulators apprentice was tasked with assisting with the installation of insulation on round metal duct. The work was being performed in a mechanical penthouse. The crew had cleaned their work area at the end of their shift, placing scrap pieces of insulation into an empty box. The box was carried to an access ladder, which was about four feet in height. One worker climbed up the ladder to the next level, and the apprentice passed the box up to him. The next day the apprentice indicated his back was sore. His supervisor transported him to a medical clinic where he was examined, given pain medication, and placed on restricted duty.

LESSONS LEARNED

The work area for the day was fairly open; however, access to the HVAC duct was difficult in some areas. Completing the work required climbing over other duct work and utilities. Though typical of construction sites, this may have contributed to worker fatigue and possibly have contributed to the injury. Though a task plan was completed for the work, it did not address awkward working positions or the removal of waste material from the area.

During the investigation the apprentice’s co-worker indicated they had only partially loaded the box and it did not weigh more than 20 pounds. It is important to remember that lifting and twisting while holding any amount of weight can result in an injury. Proper lifting technique, or better still the use of mechanical devices wherever possible, can help prevent this type of injury. It is also important to recognize report injuries immediately. Prompt treatment can help to minimize the impact and severity of an injury.

ACTION ITEMS

1. Ask your contractor about how they manage job hazard analysis and task planning. 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 people working in awkward positions? Are people using proper techniques when lifting and carrying materials? Are safer methods for material movement available? Have these issues been addressed in their task plan?

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

Distribution:
All CPO Staff