



**HEALTH, SAFETY,
& ENVIRONMENTAL**



SAFETY ALERT

Alert #: SA 41-26

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Back Strains Are Trending

Recently, three first aid incidents involving minor back muscle strain occurred within a 7-day period. All three happened during routine work involving manual exertion.

Incidents:

1. Lower back discomfort after pushing a sliding gate open at the end of the day.
2. Lower back discomfort while attempting to lift an air pressure pot at midday.
3. Lower back discomfort while moving a suction hose using a shovel at arm's length in the late morning.

Cross-Incident Factor Trends:

- All injuries are lower-back related
- All involve manual exertion (force + posture)
- All occurred during routine tasks (not high-risk or abnormal operations)

Recurring Causal Themes:

1. Poor body mechanics (twisting, reaching, or pushing under load)
2. Awkward positioning (extended reach, uneven stance, improper lifting)
3. Lack of mechanical advantage (no assist tools, team lift, or repositioning)
4. Task normalization (routine work not recognized as a hazard exposure)

Timespan Analysis:

- All 3 incidents occurred within a 7-day window
- No single "peak hour" concentration; incidents occurred across the full workday (late morning, midday, end of day)

Fatigue Factors:

- Reduced body control and posture awareness
- Increased likelihood of rushing or taking shortcuts
- Less tendency to stop and reposition before exertion

Exposure Drivers:

These injuries come down to how force is applied to the body during routine tasks:

- Force + posture + repetition (ergonomic triangle)
- Lack of pre-task evaluation (body positioning, lift planning, reach distance)

Key Takeaway:

These incidents were not caused by unusual conditions, they occurred during normal work. The risk is in how routine tasks are performed, not the tasks themselves.

Final Reminder:

Nobody plans to hurt their back, but it happens fast. One twist, one awkward push, one reach at arm's length, and you're hurt.

Before putting force on anything:

- Get close to the work
- Square your shoulders and hips
- Keep the load between your waist and shoulders
- Use your legs, not your back
- If it feels off, **Stop and Reset**.

Proper use of the **GIS LIFE Processes** can help to create a **FAIL-SAFE** Work Environment

