TOOLBOXTALK

DAILY STRECHING EXERCISES

WHAT IS A SAFETY START UP?

If you have worked on large commercial construction jobs, you may have probably heard the phrase Stretch and Flex. If you have ever done any kind of formalized exercise or athletic training, you have probably heard the phrase Warm Up. Yet, these two activities are almost identical despite their two different names.

One key reason is the purpose of the Stretch and Flex session. Generally, a warm up is meant to help prevent injury for an exercise session that lasts less than a few hours, while the stretch and flex is meant to identify anyone in the work force who may not be physically fit for duty AND help everyone else prevent acute injury – from a single moment of overload – and chronic injury – from exertion over a longer time.

However, a good safety start up is not limited to physical preparation. Team members who display illness, ailments, substance use or poor disposition should be approached by supervision to ensure they are fit for duty. This includes watching for signs of depression or other mental illness both in the moment and over time.

Similarly, supervisors should speak with anyone who seems to be in discomfort while performing the exercises or is unable to perform the movement through the proper range of motion. Based on the results of the discussion, the intended work task may need to be adjusted for that team member.

Lastly, including other safety discussion during the exercises and movements can help keep the session less tedious. Possible ideas to use are safety trivia games, JSA review, sharing solutions, public recognition / appreciation, short term employee development, microlearning catch phrases ("Rope Grabs Up!" "No Blind Work!" "Stay Hydrated!") or team building moments.

APPROACH TO EXERCISES

Dynamic Movement- Modern science has produced tons of evidence that the best way to warm up the muscles and the body's other connective tissues is through dynamic movements. In other words, reaching the arms, back, or legs into an uncomfortable position and holding it for several seconds is NOT the best way to prevent injury. Therefore, the best exercises will involve movement and mild bouncing to prepare the body for a day of physical work.

Full Body – Another smart strategy for selecting exercises is to ensure that the team members warm up their entire body from head to feet (toe warm ups do not seem to prevent many injuries). This also aids in thoroughly identifying anyone who cannot move a specific part of their body.

Target The Problem – Worker's compensation insurers have been more than happy to provide information about common musculoskeletal injuries for about a century. Each work task requires different body parts more than others, but by targeting the most commonly injured body parts, a good dynamic warm up can help reduce the likelihood of harm to the worker.

COMMON WORK INJURY BODY PARTS

- Wrists
- Neck
- Shoulders
- Back
- Knees
- All other joints (hips, elbows & ankles)
- Hands
- Feet

SPECIFIC EXERCISES

Just like any exercise regimen, the best exercises are the ones that a person is willing to do. Similarly, you only achieve meaningful results with meaningful effort. Therefore, exercise selection should ensure balance: select movements that are easy enough for less athletic team members to perform while causing the body to actually work through the range of motion.

There are hundreds of dynamic movements to choose from for the dynamic exercises; a simple internet search will provide a variety of options. The list below represents a list of easy to perform movements that will warm up the above listed body parts, but you and your team should try different moves until they have a standard set they like. Each move can be performed anywhere between 10 – 30 seconds. Make the movements big with a natural speed, but avoid tensing or over reaching. Each person is different, so let everyone find their own comfort zone.

Wrist Circles – Make a loose fist and make circles with the hand repeatedly, changing direction after a few repetitions.

Shoulder Circles – Starting with a shrug, makecircles with the shoulders and change direction every few repetitions.

Arm Circles – Moving one arm at a time, make smooth big circles in the air. Switch arms and directions every 3 – 5 repetitions.

Shoulder Circles Example

Up & Downs – Reach upward overhead with your hands and stand on your toes for 1 – 2 seconds. Relax with your hands at your side for a moment, then bend forward at the waist to touch your ankles. Hold that for a second, then return to neutral and repeat. Bend the knees if needed to touch your ankles. 8 – 12 repetitions

Up & Down Example

Side Lunge- From standing position, step to the side to widen your stance and bend at the knee and hips to shift your weight to that side while keeping your chest up. Return to neutral, then repeat on the other side. 6 – 8 repetitions each side

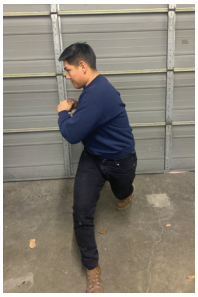


Side Lunge Example

Twist Ups – From a neutral standing position, reach the left hand up and across the body and cross the right foot in front of the left foot. 6 – 8 repetitions each side


Twist Ups Example

Lunge & Twist – From a neutral standing position, step the right foot forward and lower the left knee toward the ground (but not touching it) with the chest up and the right knee over right ankle (not past the toe). Twist the shoulders toward the right for a moment, then return to neutral. Repeat on the other side. 4 – 6 repetitions each side.



Lunge & Twist Example

When done right, a safety startup session will end with the team focused on working safely and feeling better than when the session started. Workers who perform the movements with the proper intensity have reduced injury rates and increased productivity in their work. Use these tips to help make yours build towards success!

DO

- Maintain positivity and an appropriately serious tone
- Include various team members to lead discussions
- Perform controlled movements with a moderately challenging pace & range of motion
- Ensure supervisors observe team members for possible red flags
- Set an expectation for the day's safety approach

DON'T

- Let it become a joke or complaining session
- Have the exact same session every day – variation is key
- Go too fast or too slow – stay controlled
- Hesitate to talk with someone who may be in pain or need help
- Miss the opportunity – start the day with safety!

Talk Given By:	Date:
Company Name:	Location:
Printed Name	**Signature**

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