TAKE 5 FOR SAFETY

INSTRUCTOR'S NOTES

5-MINUTE SAFETY DRILL

Strains: Backs Can't Be Replaced Yet!

FOCUS: Thousand of firefighters sustain injuries to the back each year. This reflects negatively to ability to serve and bottom line impact to our budgets as insurance costs soar. We must give back injury prevention more emphasis to ensure an effective team that is ready and able to respond to emergencies.

Date:_____

Shift:_____

Dept:_____

Station:_____

Training Code:_____

NOTES:

CHALLENGE

The spinal column is one of the body's main supports. This fragile set of bones must last us a lifetime! Proper posture, conditioning and good body mechanics are the key components of any program designed to prevent back injuries. Up to 80% of Americans will suffer back pain at some time in their lives. The cause of the back pain in 90% of the cases is strain or sprain back muscles, ligaments or soft tissue. According to the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), back injuries cost American industry 10=14 billion dollars in worker's compensation and about 100 million work days annually. These conditions generally heal completely, but often recur if prevention strategies are not used.

The fire service is no exception from this data as strains and sprains negatively impact firefighters each year! Firefighters are engaged in lifting, pulling, pushing and positioning themselves in awkward position in order to complete daily tasks! Injuries to the back if not properly treated can create problems that last a lifetime. Careers can be shortened due to back injuries.

Ergonomics, fitness and daily warm up activity must become part of regular routines to ensure a long, pain free career and high quality of life.

DISCUSSION

- Do you participate in warm-up activities prior to working out or engaging in strenuous activities?
- Do you have a fitness routine that includes exercise, proper diet and stress management?
- When evaluating tasks, are the risks and proper body mechanics addressed?
- Do our equipment purchases address needed ergonomic improvements to reduce risks of injury to backs?
- Do you practice good lifting techniques when away from work?

The greatest asset of the fire service is our people; protect them!

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