

Location \_\_\_\_\_ Trainer \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## THE BRAIN IS MIGHTIER THAN THE BRAWN

It was a routine job. The employee was closing the door on a hopper car. He put a steel bar in the door lug and pulled on the bar to latch the door. When it didn't, he really "put his back" into it. He pulled as hard as he could. The bar slipped out of the lug. He lost his balance and twisted his back. Result: a severe back strain.

So many people, like the man who tried to latch the car door, have done the job unsafely many times without injury. Most of the time, a little extra effort was all that was needed. Once in a while, the bar would slip out. But nothing serious happened - just a little slip and loss of balance. Then he'd give it another try. But finally, the accident happened - the predictable outcome of a long series of unsafe acts.

This kind of accident, which we call "overexertion-strain," happens most often in maintenance work. Nuts or bolts freeze up, valves corrode, or equipment must be "broken" loose or moved with great force for short distances - maybe only a fraction of an inch.

When something gets stuck, the first thing most people try is brute force. That's because "stuck" objects seem to challenge our brawn rather than our brain. Much of the time, brawn works. Unfortunately, this encourages people to work unsafely.

How do you stop overexertion-strain accidents?

It's simple. Here's how.

**Discuss overexertion--strain accidents** with your employees. Ask them to tell you about situations in their jobs that may call for over exertion. Then tell them how to avoid the hazard.

**Show them the safe way to substitute mechanical force for manual force.** If there's equipment available to get something unstuck, it should be used!

**Emphasize the use of brains over muscle.** There's usually a trick of the trade - an intelligent way - to loosen things up ... expanding by heating, increasing leverage properly, tapping to break binding seals, and using lubricants and dissolvers. Make sure your people know these methods.

**Urge workers to get help when they need it.** Stuck objects seem to challenge people to do it by themselves. Tell them to ask for help. Whatever you do, don't make fun of someone who does ask. And never say, "You just didn't try hard enough."

**Don't approve unsafe acts by "looking the other way."** When you see someone use a pipe extension to get more wrench leverage and you fail to correct him, you're putting your stamp of approval on an unsafe practice. Correct every person you see acting unsafely.

**Prevent "stickers."** Things that stick today have probably gotten stuck before. Identify these potential hazards and correct them.