

## The Importance of Team Lifts

Some items are too heavy, bulky or awkward for one person to handle safely. That's when a team lift can be the right call. A team lift occurs when two or more workers coordinate to move a load together, distributing the physical demand and reducing the risk of injuries.

### When to Use a Team Lift

- **The load is too heavy for one person to move safely.** If you cannot move it with controlled, steady effort, do not attempt it alone. As a general guideline, loads of 50 pounds or more typically require a team lift, though your workplace may have its own weight thresholds. Follow your employer's guidelines.
- **The load is large, awkward or hard to grip.** Bulky or unevenly shaped items are difficult to control and harder for one person to stabilize.
- **The load is unstable or has shifting contents.** These loads require more control than a single person can reliably maintain.
- **Visibility is blocked.** If carrying the load alone would prevent you from seeing where you are going, a second person is needed to guide you.
- **The distance is short.** Team lifts work best over short distances. If you need to move a load a long distance or across multiple levels, a mechanical aid such as a dolly, hand truck or pallet jack is a safer and more practical option.
- **The item is labeled "Team Lift Required."** Always follow load labeling. If a box, container or piece of equipment is marked for a team lift, do not attempt to move it alone, regardless of how manageable it seems.

A team lift is not always the best solution. If the load is extremely heavy, needs to travel a long distance or will be moved repeatedly throughout a shift, mechanical aids should be the first choice.

### Best Practices for Team Lifts

- **Designate a leader before you lift.** One person should call out commands such as "ready," "lift," "walk," and "set it down." Everyone else follows those cues. This keeps the team moving in sync and prevents sudden, uncoordinated movements.
- **Communicate the plan before you start.** Agree on the path of travel, where the load is going and where it will be set down. Identify any hazards along the route, such as uneven flooring, tight turns or limited lighting.
- **Use proper body mechanics.** Each person on the team should keep their back straight, bend at the hips and knees, hold the load close to their body and lift using their legs. Move your feet to change direction rather than rotating your torso while holding a load. Good form matters even when you are sharing the load.
- **Lift and move together.** Start, stop and lower the load simultaneously. Moving out of sync can shift the load unexpectedly and place sudden strain on one person.
- **Communicate throughout the move.** Keep talking. If something feels wrong, call it out immediately so the team can stop and reassess.

### Key Takeaways

A team lift is not a sign that you cannot handle the job. It is a sign that you are approaching the job the right way. If a load cannot be safely moved by one person, asking a coworker for help is often the right decision. If you have questions about when a team lift is required or how to perform one safely, speak with your supervisor.