

# Injury Prevention Guide for FLOOD FIGHTERS

✓ **Check with your physician** to be certain you are fit for strenuous activity.

✓ **Dress in lots of light layers**

This keeps your muscles warm; remove layers as needed so you don't get overheated.

✓ **Wear sturdy & comfortable boots with good arch support**

Uncomfortable boots or shoes with poor support & traction can trigger foot, leg, hip & back pain.

✓ **Wear durable work gloves with a good grip**

Not only to protect your hands but to help you avoid dropping tools & sandbags. Besides the injury the falling items can create, the instinctual corrective motions to 'catch' these objects can create another set of painful problems.

✓ **Make sure people can see you**

Wear outer clothing made of reflective material or put reflective tape on your existing clothing, especially if you're working at night. Use extra caution when heavy equipment is being operated.

✓ **Drink plenty of water**

You can get dehydrated even when you're cold. Water also transports oxygen to your muscles & protect your joints. Energy/sports drinks, sodas & coffee are no substitute for water.

✓ **Slow & steady wins the race**

You're more likely to injure yourself or someone else when you're rushed or tired. Begin activity at a moderate pace and increase levels slowly to your comfort zone, taking a short break when needed.

✓ **Warm up & stretch**

Cold muscles are much more prone to injury and more likely to be sore and achy the next day. Warm up the muscles in your back, arms and legs with these quick, easy stretches:



**HANDS:** Keep elbow straight, hold the fingers of the hand to be stretched & gently push back on the fingers, extending the wrist until you feel a comfortable stretch. Hold for 20 seconds, relax. Alternate.



**SHOULDERS:** Sitting or standing, lift your shoulders, hold for 3 seconds & relax.



**BACK:** Stand straight with feet apart. Keeping your knees straight, support your back with your hands while bending your back as far backwards as possible. Hold for 5 seconds.



**ARMS & SIDES:** Stand straight with one hand on your hip & the other straight up. Keep your pelvis in mid-position, bend to side with opposite arm reaching overhead & hold steady (avoid bouncing motion) for 5 seconds. Alternate.



**LEGS:** Stand with leg to be stretched on a curb, box or chair (depending on your balance & comfort issues) with your heel over the edge. Keeping your back straight, push the opposite hip forward & bend your trunk forward. Hold approximately 20 seconds. Alternate.

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## SHOVELING, LIFTING & “BUCKET BRIGADE” TIPS:

- Keep your **FEET ABOUT SHOULDER-WIDTH APART** for balance.
- Keep your **BACK STRAIGHT** and **ELBOWS CLOSE** to your body.
- Always **BEND AT THE KNEES - NOT THE WAIST!**
- **TIGHTEN YOUR “CORE” STOMACH MUSCLES** to help support your back.
- Make sure to **BREATHE!** The natural instinct is to hold your breath while lifting.
- Keep the **LOAD AS CLOSE TO BODY** as possible.
- **DON'T TWIST OR BEND** at the waist. **Move your feet & legs** while turning.
- Try to keep your motions **SMOOTH**. Again, avoid movements that jerk or twist
- If you need to set the load down, use the same techniques.
- **PAIN** is your body's *warning system*, make sure you listen to it or you may make injuries or developing conditions worse.

### WRONG WAY TO LIFT!!



### CORRECT WAY TO LIFT!!



### TIP! Make sure to select the right shovel

A shovel with the right height and blade size for you is very important. If there is too much sand piled on the end of the shovel, you run the risk of injury due to excess weight. A few extra smaller shovelfuls per bag will be better in the long run.

## AFTER SANDBAGGING:

After long periods of exertion, don't forget to take a few minutes to cool down and 'walk it off'. Repeat some of your warm-up stretches and drink lots of water. Stiff, sore muscles which can be treated by cool baths, ice packs & wraps (15-20 minutes at a time) in the first 24 hours followed by heat packs or warm soaks in the tub. If you have pain, redness and/or swelling in your joints or muscles, don't forget the **R.I.C.E.** method - Rest, Ice, Compression & Elevation. Gentle massage therapy can also help decrease healing time and relieve pain & stiffness. If you feel over-the-counter medications would be beneficial, please check with your physician or pharmacist.

If the pain persists or is severe, make sure to contact a health care professional such as your physician or physical therapist.

This information brought to you courtesy of:



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