[IMAGE]

Back Belts Do Little to Reduce Injury Claims

If you've ever walked through a department or grocery store while employees were stocking shelves or moving supplies, you've probably witnessed a back belt in action. Many employers recommend or require back belts to reduce employee injuries and injury claims.

But are back belts effective? Not according to a study in the December 6, 2000 issue of the *Journal of the American Medical Association*. In the largest study of its kind, incidence rates of workers' compensation claims and six-month incidence rates of self-reported low back pain were gathered from 13,873 employees at 160 retail merchandise stores in 30 states. Eighty-nine stores required back belt use; 71 had a voluntary back-belt policy. All employees were interviewed at the study's inception and again at a two-year follow-up.

Results showed that neither frequent back belt use nor a store policy requiring such use had any significant effect on back injury claim rates or self-reported back pain. Accounting for multiple risk factors, such as lifting frequency and/or a history of previous back injury, did not substantially alter these findings.

In 1998, a U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics survey revealed that Americans suffered nearly 300,000 back injuries due to overexertion, and resulting in lost workdays. As this study shows, back belts probably aren't the answer to this growing problem. Fortunately, there are other options, including sound advice and care from an expert in dealing with back pain: your local doctor of chiropractic. For more information on back pain, go to http://www.chiroweb.com/tyh/backpain.html. To find a chiropractor near you, go to http://www.chiroweb.com/cgi-bin/locator.

Reference:

Wassell JT, Gardner LI, Landsittel DP, et al. A prospective study on back belts for prevention of back pain and injury. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, Dec. 6, 2000: Vol. 284, No. 21, pp2727-32.

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