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Advice to Kansas workers: lift with your legs, not your back
Survey highlights workplace accidents; KDOL offers preventive measures for businesses

TOPEKA — You've likely heard the advice many times - lift with your legs and not with your back. According to the 2008 Survey of Occupational Injuries and Illnesses, Kansas workers would do well to take heed. The report, produced by the Kansas Department of Labor (KDOL) in cooperation with the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, includes data involving days away from work that indicates the back is the most commonly injured part of the body.

The report is based on a survey of 3,500 randomly selected Kansas private employers and includes information on annual counts and incident rates for nonfatal workplace injuries and illnesses in the private sector during 2007.

"This information is very useful because it can inform our efforts to assist employers in building effective workplace safety programs," said KDOL Secretary Jim Garner. "Through our free safety consultation services, we can work with Kansas employers to ensure these numbers begin to decline."

KDOL provides a variety of services for Kansas employers to help them prevent injuries and illnesses in the workplace. The free, confidential consultations provided by KDOL include:

- one-on-one meetings with employers
- a walk-through safety evaluation
- a written report with findings and suggested solutions
- a follow-up visit to ensure any serious hazards were corrected and to give additional suggestions for improvement

Using KDOL's free consultation program, employers can identify potential hazards at their worksites, improve safety and health management practices and qualify for exemptions from routine Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) inspections.

Other findings of the 2007 survey include:

- An estimated 48,200 nonfatal workplace injuries and illnesses occurred among private industry workers in 2007, or just over 132 for each day.
- Approximately 10,370 of the 2007 workplace injuries and illnesses required days away from work, with an average of seven days off the job.
- Strains and sprains were the number one cause of injuries, representing more than one-third of the injuries involving days away from work. These types of injuries led every major industry sector.
- Men accounted for 65 percent of all cases requiring days away from work.

- Workers 35 to 44 years of age accounted for 27.3 percent of injured or ill workers. The 45- to 54-year-old age group accounted for 22.5 percent of injuries and illnesses.
- Injuries resulting in fractures accounted for the longest absences from work, with an average of 29 days.

This data from a random sampling of private employers differs from the data collected and released by the Division of Workers Compensation. Each year, KDOL's Division of Workers Compensation releases the numbers of all reported workplace injuries and illnesses reported from both public and private employers.

For more information regarding this survey, please visit www.bls.gov/iif or call KDOL Labor Market Information Services at (785) 296-5000. To find out more about the free workplace safety consultation, go to www.dol.ks.gov or call KDOL's Industrial Safety and Health Division at (785) 296-4386.

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