

LUMBAR SUPPORT (LIFTING) BELT POLICY

Introduction

Lumbar support (lifting) belts are a device purported to prevent or reduce occupational back injuries. However, these protective or preventive claims are not supported by scientific research. Both the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) discourage the widespread use of such belts and instead, encourage the establishment of a formal program to make sure that tasks do not exceed a worker's physical capabilities, appropriate engineering controls are instituted, and workers get training on lifting mechanics and techniques. These recommendations essentially parallel the approach that the Employee Occupational Health and Wellness (EOHW) and the Occupational and Environmental Safety Office (OESO) have developed for managing occupational back injuries at Duke. The following policy defines the Institutional philosophy and procedures for addressing requests for using lumbar support belts.

Policy

Lumbar Support belts are discouraged for use unless specifically prescribed by EOHW for the individual employee. Supervisor or employee requests for such belts will result in an ergonomic consultation to the work area:

- I. The OESO ergonomist will meet with the supervisor and employees in the potentially affected work area and conduct an ergonomic review.
- II. The findings from the site review will be communicated to the department and/or medical providers and a response plan will be developed.
- III. The ergonomist will work with the supervisor to implement any corrective measures. These may include work area specific training and information on the lifting mechanics for their specific jobs and/or information on suitable engineering controls such as mechanized equipment or lifting aids.