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SAFETY ALERT

No. 17-03

Preventing Strain and Sprain Injuries

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LAUSD is committed to providing our employees a safe and healthy work environment. Our goal is to ensure everyone returns home safely to his or her loved ones. Sprains and strains present a hazard not only to District workers but workers nationwide. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics has found “Sprains and Strains” to be the number one cause of non-fatal work place injuries in the United States. In fiscal year 2016-17, 32% of all Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) recordable employee injuries at LAUSD involved strains or sprains resulting in over 1,000 injured employees. In the past 4 years, sprains & strains has consistently been in the top 3 causes of employee injuries.

Although sprains or strains can be perceived as minor injuries, recovery times, days away from work and medical costs add up quickly. Last year, incurred costs associated with these injuries cost LAUSD over \$13 million. This cost does not include productivity loss associated with the absence of injured employees, or time and effort put into looking for and training interim replacement employees.

By evaluating and recognizing the contributing factors of these types of injuries, the number of accidents can be significantly reduced. Work practices, personal habits and lifestyle all play a part in the likelihood of being injured. Risk factors for injury include ergonomic and individual aspects.

Ergonomic Risk Factors that Can Result in Sprains & Strains

Risk Factor & Definition	Examples
Static Postures - Standing or sitting for long periods of time	<i>Office worker:</i> Performing most of their tasks at their desk without taking breaks to stretch.
Awkward Posture - Overreaching or twisting	<i>Cafeteria worker:</i> Reaching over their shoulders to pick up items off the shelf.
Excessive Force - Pushing, pulling or carrying items that are too heavy	<i>Teacher:</i> Moving a heavy box of paper while reorganizing their room.
Repetitive Motions - Frequent bending, lifting or typing	<i>Buildings and Grounds Worker:</i> After lunch, emptying out all the school’s trash bags into the dumpster.

Individual Risk Factors

- Not enough sleep or rest
- Lack of exercise
- Poor nutrition and insufficient water
- Not recognizing early signs of an injury

What Can I Do to Prevent Injury?

Managers should encourage employees to incorporate stretching exercises, such as those listed on the next page, before their shift and throughout the day. Stretching can make a difference in your personal health by increasing muscle flexibility and circulation.

Which Stretches Can Help Prevent Sprains & Strains?

The following stretches can increase muscle flexibility, improve circulation and your posture!



SHOULDER STRETCH

Raise your arm over & behind your head with elbow bent grasp your elbow with other hand & pull gently until a stretch is felt. Hold for 10 seconds. Repeat on opposite side.



LEG SPLIT

Stand with feet as wide apart as possible. Place hands on your hips. Shift hips to the left. Hold the stretch for 10 seconds. Repeat on opposite side.



UPPER BACK STRETCH

Bring your left arm across in front of your body. Hold elbow with your opposite arm. Gently pull across your chest until a stretch is felt in your back. Hold for 10 seconds. Repeat on opposite side.



BACK ARCHES

Stand with feet shoulder distance apart. Put your hands on your lower back. Arch your back backwards. Hold the stretch for 10 seconds. This stretch can be done standing or sitting on the edge of your chair.



EAR TO SHOULDER

Gently grasp right side of head while reaching behind with other your other hand. Tilt head away until a gentle stretch is felt long the left side of your neck & left shoulder. Hold for 10 seconds. Repeat on the left side.



CALF STRETCH

Face a wall & stand 12 inches away from it. Extend one leg behind you, keeping both feet flat on the floor. Keep your back leg straight. Lean towards the wall until you feel a stretch in the calf of the extended leg. Repeat on opposite side.



ROLL FORWARD & BACKWARD

Start off with your arms relaxed at your sides. Then lift & roll shoulders forward in a circular motion for 10 seconds. Repeat by rolling shoulders backwards.



CHIN TUCK

Keep your head straight & tuck your chin into your neck. Hold for 5 seconds.



STANDING QUAD STRETCH

Stand & hold on to a stable object for balance. Grasp your ankle from behind. Pull ankle towards buttocks until you feel a stretch. Hold for 10 seconds. Repeat on opposite side.



SEATED STRETCH

Sit on a chair & cross arms over your abdomen. Slowly bend neck down & lean forward. Keep elbows straight & try to reach the floor. Hold for 10 seconds.

**Caution must be taken if you have existing conditions. Please consult with your medical doctor prior to performing any of these stretches.