



Labour – Ergo-Tips 2010-02

Tarpping and Untarpping on a Flatbed Trailer

Do you use tarps to cover loads on a flatbed truck and want to prevent or reduce aches, pains, and injuries? Then this Ergo-Tip information sheet is for you.

Tarpping and untarpping is demanding on the body that puts extra strain on your arms, back, and legs. The purpose of the Ergo-Tips is to help you perform your job more efficiently by reducing or eliminating injury and pain.

Ergonomic related issue	Consider the following
Lifting/lowering, grasping and pulling: • The tarp can be very heavy and is often awkward to move and unfold. • Strong winds and poor weather conditions can add to the difficulty in handling the tarp. Carrying: • A folder tarp is heavy and awkward to carry and may quickly overload and fatigue your muscles increasing the chance of an injury.	• Do not attempt any physically demanding work immediately after driving for a long period as many of your muscles are in a fatigued state (refer to Ergo-Tip on Long Haul driving). • Use two or three smaller sections of tarp so it is easier to handle. • Get assistance from others if possible. • During poor weather conditions, position the trailer in an area to try to protect from the elements (i.e. side of a building to protect from strong winds). • Park the trailer on level ground. Any inclines will increase the resistance when pulling portions of the tarp. • Use material handling equipment such as a fork lift to move the folded tarp into position. If this is not possible, try to get assistance from other workers. • Use a tarp system that eliminates the need to carry the tarp such as a system that rolls and stores the tarp. • To make it easier to move the tarp on the load get some air movement under it by moving it up and down. • Use a tarp made out of lighter materials. • Do not make sudden or ‘jerking’ movements when lifting or pulling the tarp as it can overload your muscles/joints. • Use your arms, legs, and body to lift, lower and pull the tarp.
Awkward Posture: • Pulling the tarp and tying it down can result in awkward bending, reaching, and twisting.	• Use a wide base of support for increased stability. • Proper footwear (based on the conditions) to keep base stable. • Avoid over reaching and keep the tarp close to your body. • Prevent twisting by keeping your feet and shoulder square to the task being performed. • Pull tarp towards your body.

Gripping/Grasping: • Lifting and pulling the tarp requires a high amount of grip strength. The weather conditions such as a humid, rainy or cold day can make it more difficult to grasp the tarp.	• Wear non-slip or slip resistant gloves. • Grasp the tarp and not ropes or straps. Ropes or straps can break and weaken. • Use both hands to pull the tarp to reduce the chance of overstraining the shoulder.
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Other control measures:

There are a number of alternative methods of tarping using manual and mechanical equipment which can reduce or eliminate many of the physically demanding tasks. Investigate alternative ways to reduce the physical demands with your employer and work place committee or representative.

Pay attention to signs and symptoms:

- Signs and symptoms can be a warning of a potential injury. Make adjustments to compensate for the signs and symptoms you feel. Common signs and symptoms may include:
 - Ache or soreness in your neck, shoulders, back: This can happen the next day or a couple of days after tarping. Some temporary soreness is expected with physically demanding tasks, however persistent soreness or achiness should be investigated.
 - Sudden sharp pain in muscles/joints: Occurs when performing a task too quickly when lifting or pulling.

Employers under Federal Jurisdiction have an obligation to assess the hazards in the work place. Contact a HRSDC – Labour Program District Office at 1-800-641-4049 if you have any questions on the *Canada Labour Code* Part II ergonomic requirements or to request a copy of the Labour Program’s ergonomic publications.

Visit the HRSDC – Labour Program internet website (labour.gc.ca) for access to health and safety publications and the new Musculoskeletal Injury (MSI) E-tool.