



Proper Pipe Handling

Have you ever tried to stop a joint of 16 inch pipe from rolling down a hill after it has picked up a little speed? If you have, let that be your last time. Workers must stand clear when pipe is rolling.

Occasionally, we hear about a worker being injured after jumping in the ditch to do something at the time a section of pipe was being lowered. When pipe is directly overhead and being put in place by sideboom tractors or other machinery, stay clear of it.

When pipe is being moved by equipment using slings made of wire or belting, several important factors must be remembered.

- **First, be sure** the section is balanced so it won't slip out of the sling when it is raised.
- **Second, only one** loose section should be moved at a time; if more than one section is handled, the load probably won't be balanced, and the pipe will slide out of the sling when the load is lifted.
- **Third, don't attempt** to move pipe using a sling when pipe is covered with frost, ice or snow. It is almost impossible to hold a section in the sling under such conditions. The safest method of handling separate sections using machinery is to provide a caliper-type clamp.

Those who are guiding pipe that is being moved should keep their hands on the outside of the pipe. Sometimes persons will grab the end of a section by placing their hand on the inside of the pipe. When the pipe moves, their hands may be cut from the sharp edges, or if the end of the section strikes something, their fingers could be cut off.

Of course, all equipment should be checked frequently:

- Be sure your pipe skids will hold the load you intend to place on them.
- When pipe is hauled on a trailer, make sure the load is secured.
- The bolster on the two-wheeled pole trailers should have a wooden strip or a piece of belting across the top. This will cause the load to be held firm when the binder is tightened.
- When storing pipe, use sleepers between each layer and have each layer securely tied.

In summary, here are some important things to remember when you are handling pipe:

- Stay out of the path of rolling pipe.
- Stay clear of pipe when it is being transported
- Always wear gloves and goggles when needed.
- Steel-toed Safety shoes are strongly recommended.
- Wear your hard hat.
- Keep pipe balanced when it's in a sling.
- Check tools, equipment and skids frequently.

Now that we've unloaded the flatbed full of pipe, we still have the job of moving it to the trench for installation. But, our crane went down the road, leaving us with the task of safely lifting this same pipe to the trench excavation. WHAT?

Lengths of pipe are awkward and heavy. Balancing a piece of pipe over your shoulder is almost impossible, but sometimes we play Hercules. When this happens, another body part is susceptible to injury--namely your back. Have you ever strained your back? It lasts forever, not just a few minutes.

But you say, "We didn't have the right equipment available, so I tried to move it all by myself." What about asking a co-worker to help you? Nope, never thought about it. Now a big-time back injury might put you out of commission for weeks or even months. Another statistic, another hurt body, another accident that could have been avoided.

Handling pipe is awkward, dangerous, and maybe even life-threatening if the load gets away from us. Always, always, use material handling equipment.