



# Tarping and Untarping Flatbed Trailers

A flat-bed driver was covering a load of steel with a large tarp. While pulling hard on the tarp to unfold it, the driver's felt a sudden pain in his right shoulder. This was a recurrence of a previous shoulder injury also developed during tarping. This injury resulted in extensive therapy and two days off of work. The worker's compensation claim was \$25,000.

## Recommended Practices

### For the Driver:

- 1) Use lighter and smaller tarps when possible.
- 2) Ask for help for the tarping and untarping.
- 3) Use a forklift to get the tarp on top of the load.
- 4) If a forklift is not available, get help from other workers and plan the lift. Keep the load close to the body, avoid twisting, and lift together.
- 5) Get a firm grip on the tarp. Do not just hold the ropes as they can slip or break.
- 6) Spread legs for balance before pulling tarp.
- 7) When conditions are windy, park close to buildings if possible so they provide some shelter to reduce the tarps from blowing.
- 8) Use 3-point contact when getting on and off trailers. Climb on/off the flat bed via from the rear of the trailer or the catwalk. Don't jump.
- 9) Wear proper shoes that are appropriate for the weather conditions.
- 10) Before pulling the tarp, move air under the tarp by lifting and lowering it to move air underneath.
- 11) Pull tarp with two hands. Keep hands close torso and about waist height. Pull towards the body.
- 12) Use arms, legs, and body weight to pull the tarp.
- 13) Wear gloves to prevent loss of grip



### For the Employer:

- 1) Provide lighter and smaller tarps. Covering a load with 3 smaller tarps, compared to 2 large tarps results in lower physical demands.
- 2) Consider alternate tarping methods, such as sliders, rack and tarp kits, curtain side systems, roll-ups, and tarping machines.
- 3) Follow-up with regulations to provide restrictions to load sizes.
- 4) Instruct new drivers on basic strategies of tarping (e.g. where to place and unfold the tarp, how to tuck in the folds, where to connect bungees).
- 5) Purchase detachable ladders with handles or fold out steps to aid getting on and off trailers.
- 6) Provide help to drivers during tarping.
- 7) Provide fall arrest systems in a dedicated tarping area.

*For strapping see separate tip sheet*

