OSHA Training Toolbox Talk: Material Handling and Storage – Guidelines for Using Slings to Lift

[Reference: 1910.184 / 1926.251]

A sling is a type of device manufactured specifically to lift and move heavy loads, such as construction materials or machinery. It consists of a length of sturdy material, such as nylon webbing, wire rope, or chain, with loops or hooks at each end. The sling is attached to the load to be lifted, and attached to a hoisting mechanism, such as a crane or winch.

There are several different types of slings available, including single-leg slings, multi-leg slings, and adjustable slings *(refer to handout accompanying this toolbox talk)*. Single-leg slings have only one leg, while multi-leg slings have two or more legs that come together at a central point, such as a lifting eye. Adjustable slings can be adapted to fit the size of the load being lifted.

Here are some general guidelines for using a sling for lifting:

- **Always determine the weight and size of the load to be lifted.** This will help make sure you choose a sling with adequate strength and length for the job.
- **Select the appropriate sling for the load and hoisting mechanism.** Make sure the sling is rated for the weight of the load and configuration used, and is made of a material suitable for the job.
- **Inspect the sling for any damage or wear.** Look for frayed edges, cuts, burns, broken wires or stitching, or other damage that could compromise the strength of the sling. Also make sure tags displaying the sling's lifting capacity are attached and legible. NEVER use a damaged sling.
- **Position the sling around the load.** Make sure the sling is evenly distributed around the load, and that it is not twisted or tangled. Protect the sling from sharp edges on the load when necessary.
- **Attach the hooks or loops of the sling to the hoisting mechanism.** Make sure the hooks are securely fastened and that the sling is positioned so the load is properly balanced.
- **Test the load before lifting.** Gently tug on the sling to make sure it and the load are secure.
- **Slowly lift the load using the hoisting mechanism.** Make sure to keep the load level and stable.
- **Move the load to the desired location.** Use the hoisting mechanism to carefully move the load to its destination. Use a tag line, when necessary, to maintain safe clearance from the moving load.
- **Lower the load.** Slowly lower the load to the ground or support surface, making sure to keep it level and stable. Do not let the load crush the sling on the ground or cribbing.
- **Disconnect the sling from the hoisting mechanism and remove it from the load.** Carefully disconnect and remove the sling from around the load. Do not use the hoist to pull the sling from under the load. Return it to its designated storage area when done.

It's important to follow all applicable manufacturer's safety guidelines when using a sling for lifting. It's also necessary for inexperienced workers to have a trained operator or supervisor on hand to oversee the lifting process and ensure that it is done safely and efficiently.

Does anyone have anything to add to today's discussion on the general safety guidelines for using a sling to pick up and move a load? Please sign the training certification form to ensure you get credit for attending today's toolbox training session.

COMMON TYPES AND CONFIGURATIONS OF LIFTING SLINGS