



KEEP SAFE

A Monthly Publication for Texas Electric Cooperatives

January 2011

Don't ignore the pain of a sprain or strain

While the old adage, “If it ain't broke, don't fix it,” may be considered wise words in some businesses, that's definitely not the case when it comes to injuries in the workplace. Certainly a sprained ankle is not as serious as a broken one — but if you don't provide appropriate care, it could mean big headaches in terms of employee recovery, possible further injury and lost productivity. Therefore, it's important to pay attention to sprains.

Overworked joints are susceptible to sprains and strains

A sprain is caused when a person places excessive demands on a joint, which is the place where two bones are connected to each other by a ligament. This extra stress on the joint can cause the ligaments to stretch or tear — the more severe the tear to the ligament, the more severe the sprain. Although any ligament can be sprained, some areas of the body are more likely to be injured than others. Knees, ankles, wrists and fingers are likely candidates for sprains, since we typically place more force on these joints.

Injuries also are related to the type of work you do; i.e., a delivery person who does not follow proper procedures when lifting heavy objects may sprain ligaments in his or her back. It's not always easy to recognize a sprain, since it can resemble a pulled muscle, a bruise or even a broken bone — all of which hurt.

A strain is a tearing of a muscle caused by over-exerting or pulling a muscle. Back strains are common occupational injuries. Common symptoms of sprains and strains include:

- swelling of the injured joint
- bruising at and around the point of injury
- signs of pain

Someone with a sprained or strained joint may find it painful to move the injured body part, although the joint may still function. Some sprains may cause only minimal pain. The typical ankle sprain causes damage to the lower ligaments of the ankle joint. This often creates a noticeable amount of pain and swelling. Ankle sprains above the ankle joint can be more bearable because they often cause little swelling or pain. While less painful, they can actually be more damaging because they are often never diagnosed and therefore, left untreated.

Likewise, a severe sprain can resemble a broken bone, especially if the injured area appears misshapen. If you're not sure whether an injured worker has a sprain or fracture, play it safe and call for medical help.

Combat sprains and strains with first aid

What's the best way to handle sprains and strains? Common first aid tips include:

- Remove or loosen clothing, jewelry or other constricting objects from around the joint.
- Apply a bag of crushed ice, a cold pack or cold compresses on the area. Change them several times with 20 minutes on and at least 30 minutes off for the first three or four hours and continue them for 24 hours.
- Elevate the injured area and try to avoid movement for at least 24 hours.

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January – Practice your fire escape plan

Start the year wisely by implementing these steps for getting out safely in case of fire

- Place smoke alarms on every level of your home, test monthly, and replace batteries at least once a year.
- Draw a map of your home that marks two ways out of every room, along with doors, windows, smoke alarms and an outside meeting place.
- Post emergency numbers next to every phone.
- Keep exit routes clear — move objects off the stairs, and make sure doors and windows open easily.
- Children sleep very deeply and may not hear the smoke alarm. Plan for this. Assign an adult to help them wake up and get to safety.

The fire drill

- First describe the plan to everyone in your family.
- When the smoke alarm sounds, roll out of bed and crawl to the door.
- Use the back of your hand to feel the doorknob and the edges of the door.
- If the door feels cool, open it slightly. If you don't see smoke, head outside. If you eventually see or smell smoke on your way out, "get low and go."
- If the door to your room feels warm, use your second way out. When exiting from a window on an upper floor, use a fire-escape ladder. (Never practice a window escape during a fire drill — the risk of falling is too great.)

Now, start the drill

- Push the button on your smoke alarm, so everyone knows the sound.
- Take your cell or portable phone with you.
- Make sure children follow the directions described earlier.
- Assign an adult to watch the children and correct their mistakes.
- Once outside, stress the importance of getting out and staying out until the fire department says it's safe.
- Tell your children what a great job they did, reassuring them that in a real fire, you will be there to help them get to safety.
- Practice the drill at least twice a year, with one at night.

— Home Safety Council

For more home safety tips, visit MySafeHome.org

(Sprains continued from page 1)

- Rest the injured joint while the pain persists.
- It may be appropriate to take an over-the-counter pain medication, such as aspirin or ibuprofen. Check with a doctor first.

Avoid sprains and strains

The ITT Hartford Insurance Group, a Connecticut-based company, recommends these procedures to help reduce strains and sprains:

- Modify job procedures to eliminate physical lifting.
- Use mechanical and other lifting devices if possible.
- Divide heavy loads into lighter loads.
- Bend the knees, not the back, when lifting.
- Carry loads close to the body.
- Do not turn or twist abruptly when lifting.
- Slide loads from one surface to the other with the same elevation.

— 5 minute safety talk
National Safety Council

Important Dates to Remember

2011 Loss Control Scholarship

Deadline January 14, 2011

The 2011 Loss Control Scholarship application is available on TEC's website at www.texas-ec.org located on the Loss Control page.

Available to sons and daughters of electric cooperative, municipal and contractor employees participating in TEC's Loss Control services.

2011 Loss Control Conference

March 15 – Golf Tournament

March 16 – 18 - Conference

Westin Park Central Hotel in Dallas


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Texas Electric Cooperatives

Your Touchstone Energy® Partner 

2011 TEC LOSS CONTROL SCHOOLS (31 Schools)

Regulator Recloser Capacitors (Merkel)	January 11-14
Metering (Gonzales)	January 18-21
2 Day Transformer (San Augustine)	January 26-27
Transformer (Livingston)	February 8-11
Metering (Lubbock)	February 15-18
Regulator Recloser Capacitors (San Augustine)	February 22-25
Advanced Pole Climbing (Gonzales)	February 22-25
Regulator Recloser Capacitors (Tahoka)	March 1-4
Troubleshooting (Greenville)	March 8-11
Transformer (Gonzales)	March 29-April 1
Metering (Merkel)	April 5-8
Basic Pole Climbing (San Augustine)	April 5-8
Regulator Recloser Capacitors (McGregor)	April 12-15
Hotline 1-4 (Henderson)	April 25-29
Basic Pole Climbing (Gonzales)	April 26-29
Underground (Quitman)	May 2-6
Regulator Recloser Capacitors (Gonzales)	May 10-13
Transformer (Tahoka)	May 17-20
Hotline 1-4 (Merkel)	May 23-27
Metering (McGregor)	June 7-10
Basic Pole Climbing (Tahoka)	June 7-10
Underground (Gonzales)	June 13-17
Metering (Livingston)	June 21-24
Troubleshooting (Livingston)	July 26-29
Regulator Recloser Capacitors (Greenville)	August 16-19
Hotline 1-4 (Gonzales)	August 29-Sept 2
Underground (McGregor)	September 12-16
Hotline 1-4 (Levelland)	September 26-30
Underground (Merkel)	October 3-7
Underground (Levelland)	October 17-21
Hotline 1-4 (Livingston)	October 24-28