SECTION K

USE OF A SAFETY SUPPORT BELT

Revised 4/19

Per NIOSH studies back injuries account for nearly 20% of all injuries and illnesses in the workplace and cost the nation an estimated 20 to 50 billion dollars per year. NIOSH suggests that an ergonomics program that focuses on redesigning the work environment and work tasks to reduce the hazards of lifting are the most effective methods of reducing the risk of back injury. It is important to note that NIOSH has concluded that, because of limitations of the studies that have analyzed workplace use of back support belts, the results cannot be used to either support or refute the effectiveness of back support belts in injury reduction. Back belts are meant to be *a reminder* of good body mechanics, not a *replacement* for good body mechanics.

1.0 Back belts provided by the SIPE Safety Officer are issued as safety items. Back belts do not replace the concepts of good lifting techniques or will help you lift beyond your means.

2.0 The following job classifications have been identified as recipients of back belts:

Maintenance
Custodial
Warehouse
Food Service
Special Education - for disabled students
Bus Drivers - for disabled students
Mechanics
Groundkeepers

3.0 Supervisors requesting back belts must contact the SIPE Safety Officer. Upon approval of the request, employees will be directed to contact the vendor for sizing and training on the proper use of the belts.

4.0 Back belts are issued on a one-time basis only. Any replacements needed, i.e., worn out belts, stolen belts, etc. will be the responsibility of the district or employee.

5.0 How to wear back belts:

5.1 Back belts should be worn low across the back to support the L3 and L5 vertebrae of the back.

5.2 A corset-style back belt consists of two elastic sub-assemblies joined as one unit.

The first assembly, often referred to as the primary “belt”, has the purpose of positioning the boning stays properly on the body. The second assembly, often

referred to as the cinch “strap”, is joined at the center back of the primary belt and closes over the boning stays sewn into the primary belt, exerting pressure which forms the stays to the shape of the lower back.

Shoulder straps are not suspenders. Just the opposite, a tight shoulder strap adjustment works against the principle of lumbar locking by potentially pulling the back support up the body and out of the desired low-on-the hips position.

The purpose of the shoulder straps is twofold: (1) Compliance - a supervisor looking over a group of employees can readily confirm (by looking for shoulder straps over clothing) that workers have their assigned belt with them, and (2) convenience - when not engaged, the back supports will hang loosely (like a vest) from the shoulders and remain available when work resumes.