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Manhole Cover Lifting Options

The opening of manhole covers has been one of the leading cause of injury in Public Works, Utility, and Sewer Departments. Manhole covers can weigh as much as 250 lbs. and demand extra care by employees when being removed or moved. There are a wide range of injuries caused from lifting and/or slipping and tripping while lifting the manhole cover which include but not limited to:

- Lower Back Disorders (LBD)
- Foot injuries
- Shoulder injuries
- Fingers injuries

While proper lifting techniques and training are important to prevent accidents, it is also essential to make sure that the proper engineering controls are considered. Employers should consider adding material handling devices which can aid employees in safely lifting manhole covers. Tools such as shovels and simple “hooks” have been the choice of most departments in the past, but there are other devices better suited and specifically made to assist with the safe lifting of these manhole covers.

Manhole Cover and Grate Lifting Magnetics are designed to “help save the backs” of those who have to lift manhole covers and storm grates. Truck-mounted magnetic lifters are available as well as hand dolly magnetic lifters. However, there have been people reportedly injured while using these devices.

Upon investigation, it was determined that people were not instructed on how to safely use the devices, or, they didn’t follow the manufacturer’s instructions.

Supervisors and employees should read the manual or be trained in how to properly use this equipment. If magnetic equipment does not fit into a department’s budget, other non-magnetic alternatives are available on the market.

Departments are encouraged to review the different types of devices that are available. Two devices are listed below:



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