

## Moving and lifting objects

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### What is the problem?

Moving and lifting objects such as equipment or furniture from the ground, low levels or above shoulder height.

### What are the risks?

Workers may be at risk of musculoskeletal injuries (eg sprains, strains, fractures and soft tissue injuries) to the back and shoulders when moving objects that are large, bulky, awkward or difficult to handle.

Lifting, reaching, pushing, pulling, bending and work requiring awkward postures such as working above shoulder height or below knee height may create risks.

Common sources of risk include:

- inappropriate storage facilities (eg shelves above shoulder height)
- lack of storage
- clutter that makes access and movement difficult
- uneven floor surfaces
- no or inappropriate equipment or aids to move objects
- a mismatch between the object to be moved and available moving equipment or aids
- not enough people to do the task
- limited time (eg needing to move objects quickly or no time to wait for assistance)
- heavy, awkward or bulky objects.

### What are solutions to the problem?

#### Systems

Before services are provided, employers should identify the risks and provide risk controls in consultation with workers and health and safety representatives.

Develop systems of work that:

- provide workers with information, instruction, training and supervision in relation to work procedures and use of equipment
- provide hazard reporting processes so safety issues can be identified and fixed as soon as possible
- maintain equipment and aids in a suitable condition through regular maintenance and inspections

- provide and encourage use of mechanical aids instead of lifting by hand (eg self-height adjusting bin inserts in laundry trolleys)
- reduce the frequency of objects being moved
- identify weight, size and recommended handling instructions for all relevant objects
- reduce bending or reaching by storing objects at waist height
- reduce the size or weight of objects
- match the number of workers to the task
- allocate sufficient time to complete activities.

#### Environment

- Provide storage facilities with adequate access for workers to move objects.
- Place frequently moved and large, bulky or awkward-to-handle objects on storage shelves above knee height and below shoulder height.
- Maintain floor surfaces in flat, undamaged condition with good slip resistance.
- Reduce clutter and minimise loose objects.

#### Equipment

- Store objects in smaller containers to avoid lifting and balancing heavy loads.
- Use lightweight, sturdy, stackable containers with wheels and handles to store or move objects.
- Maintain storage area doors so they can be easily opened and closed.
- Design and provide storage areas for outdoor or larger equipment.
- Provide adjustable height trolleys for moving objects.
- Attach lockable castors to objects that can be wheeled.
- Provide suitable equipment for reaching objects or performing work above shoulder height (eg step platforms with handrails provide a larger, more stable work surface than ladders).
- Place equipment on firm, non-slip surfaces.
- Maintain three points of contact when going up, down or standing on ladders (eg two feet and at least one hand or two hands and at least one foot).

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# A Health and Safety Solution Moving and lifting objects

## The problem



Carrying heavy or unwieldy items may cause tripping or muscle injury.

## A solution



A light weight, collapsible trolley allows items to be transported safely.

### Further information

#### WorkSafe Advisory Service

Toll-free 1800 136 089

[info@worksafe.vic.gov.au](mailto:info@worksafe.vic.gov.au)

[worksafe.vic.gov.au](http://worksafe.vic.gov.au)

#### Related WorkSafe publications

*Manual Handling Code of Practice, 2000*

*Working safely in community services, 2006*

*Injury hotspot – Community support services, 2008*

*WorkSafe OHS compliance kits –*

*Children's services, disability services, home care, community support services*

*Volunteer health and safety – A handbook for community service organisations, 2008*

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