

## Preparing for the New School Year

Back-to-school time is filled with anxiety and anticipation for both teachers as well as students. In order to start the school year off right, it takes a lot of patience and preparation. Everyone at the school will be busy moving and re-arranging desks, chairs, and tables, along with many other heavy items.

Teachers will be arranging classroom furniture according to their teaching style; desks will be arranged into traditional rows, cooperative clusters, or horseshoe shapes, tables will be strategically placed where teachers can see everyone clearly, and chairs will be constantly rearranged daily. It is a good idea to have set times for staff to come in and set up their classrooms. Each year we have workers' compensation claims occur from staff setting up their room in off hours when very few people are in the building. **CHAIRS DO NOT MAKE GOOD STEP STOOLS!!!** Please make sure each floor/wing of your building has easy access to step ladders and step stools. Remind staff not to cover up the window in the door to their room for their own safety and security.

These moving activities cause unnecessary strain on people, such as teachers, who are not accustomed to moving heavy objects. The "team-lifting" strategy should be implemented. Be sure to take time to train your new staff members on these safety practices. New staff need to know what your safety protocols are at your school. TRICOR Safety Consultants are available to assist with assessing these training programs and we are available for training with them. Don't forget to use your free Safe Schools online training with all your staff.

School maintenance people should seek out opportunities to help move heavy items to help these "at-risk" individuals avoid injuries. Make moving equipment available to teachers and others helping to move classroom furniture and instruct them how to lift safely.

- Remember to always lift with your legs, not your lower back
- Always PUSH the load vs PULLING
- Use available moving equipment such as dollies, carts, rollers,
- Plan the route ahead of time
- Work together to move heavy objects/furniture

### **SAFE LIFTING TECHNIQUES FOR BACK TO SCHOOL**

Lifting and moving are common activities in the workplace, and it is often forgotten that there are proper techniques that need to be followed to avoid injury. In fact, lower back injuries are the most common work-related injury cited by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA).

#### **Safe Lifting Basics**

Safe lifting plays an important role in keeping your back healthy and you safe. There are safe lifting techniques that take strain off the low back area. They include:

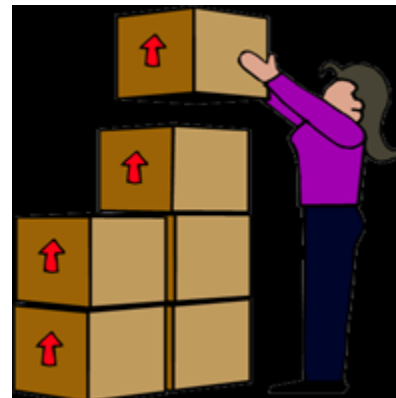
- Look over the load. Decide if you can handle it alone or if you need assistance. When in doubt, ask for help. Moving an object that is too heavy or bulky can cause severe injury.
- Clear away any potential obstacles before beginning to carry the object.
- Support and propel the object while carrying it; your grip should be firm. Carrying objects will change your balance. To keep this change of balance to a minimum, keep the load close to your body and to your normal center of gravity, between the legs and shoulders.
- Use good foot positioning. Your feet should be shoulder width apart, with one foot beside and the other foot behind the object that you are going to lift. This allows you to use the full power of your leg muscles. Leg muscles are stronger and more powerful than back muscles, so let your legs do the work.

- Bend your knees. Bending over at the waist to reach for the object you want to lift puts strain on your back, shoulder and neck muscles.
- Keep your arms and elbows as close to your body as you can while lifting. If you have to stretch your arms out completely away from your body, ask for assistance with the lift.
- Use your feet to change direction. Don't twist your body. Twisting your body adds to the stress of the lift and affects your balance.
- To lower the object, bend your knees as you did to pick it up. To place the load on a bench or shelf, set it on the edge and slide it into position. Make sure your hands and feet are clear when lowering the load.

Safe lifting of heavy objects requires training and practice. When equipment is available, it should be used to lift and carry heavy objects. Dollies, carts, wheeled platforms and coasters are designed for this purpose.

### Team Lifting

When others are helping you lift, teamwork is very important. If you're going to be carrying the load to another location, both of you should coordinate this prior to lifting the object. Check the route and clearance. One worker needs to be in a position to observe and direct the other. Lifting and lowering should be done in unison. Don't let the load drop suddenly without warning your partner



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