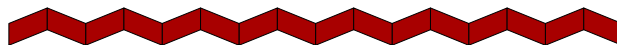




BACK PROTECTION: ORGANIZING STORAGE SPACES



Safety & Security Fact Sheet

Are you storing a potential back injury? Schools usually have a very limited amount of storage space, so those spaces often become congested with boxes and materials. When this happens, clear access to items is obstructed, which causes people to overreach, resulting in back injuries. Avoid becoming a statistic! Eight out of ten adults will suffer a significant back injury at least once in their lives.

People are not cranes! Overcrowded storerooms do not provide adequate space in which to position yourself to lift properly. Unlike a crane on a construction site, your back is not designed for long reaches and turns. If you cannot move freely, you might be tempted to overreach, which will greatly increase the strain on your back. If you are unable to reposition your feet easily, you might resort to the turn-and-twist method of moving objects. This means you have your feet firmly planted and rely on twisting your back from side to side, as you lift. This action causes great strain to your spine and does not allow your muscles to work in an efficient manner.

Add safety to your storerooms. Well-organized storerooms with good access to all items will enhance the safety of the school's staff. The following suggestions for arranging stored items will help prevent back injury.

FIVE STEPS FOR ORGANIZING YOUR STOREROOMS TO PROTECT YOUR BACK

- 1. Keep heavy items stored on shelves that are located between waist and shoulder height.** This will keep from bending at the waist to overreach.
- 2. Avoid storing objects in the “danger” zone 0 to 6 inches above the floor.** If lifting from this low level, the back has to work the hardest. It is often impossible to keep the body vertical in preventing a back injury.
- 3. Keep aisles clear around storage shelves.** The further the reach, the greater the strain is on the back.
- 4. Never use a chair to gain access to high shelves.** Keep a two-step rolling ladder or some other appropriate stepstool handy.
- 5. Break down large boxes into smaller individual items.** The smaller and lighter the items, the more shelves below waist level or above shoulder level will be appropriate for storage.

If you need assistance, call the safety section at 571-423-2010.