

## Material Storage

Improperly stored materials can result in objects falling on employees, strains, and sprains, increase the fire hazard, and contribute to slips, trip, and falls. Precautions should be taken when storing materials to reduce these exposures. Key factors to consider include the materials' height, weight, accessibility requirements, flammability, and condition of the boxes or containers.

### **Shelving and Aisles**

Shelves and rack systems should be affixed and braced appropriately to reduce the risk of toppling over during retrieval of materials or seismic activity. Permanent aisles should be marked to reduce slip, trip, and fall safety hazards.

### **Weight and Size of Materials**

- Containers that are light (<10 pounds) and small in size should be placed on the upper shelves.
- Retrieval of these materials will be less likely to cause injury.
- Heavy materials (>40 pounds) and/or awkward in shape are best placed on the middle shelves.
- Tall items should be located on lower shelves. Should it topple over, the travel distance will be diminished. Additionally, retrieval of these items can be awkward.

### **Items Frequently Used**

Store boxes/containers used on a frequent basis on shelves between chest and knee height. It will require less effort to lift and will aid in reducing strains and sprains.

### **Condition of Containers**

Bins, boxes, and containers deteriorate over time. Inspecting and replacing them at regular intervals will assure fewer accidents when lifting and moving.

### **Policies**

While proper material storage can contribute to reducing employee injuries, consider adding policies and procedures that limit the weight an employee may lift/carry. Also consider receiving product in boxes quantities weighing less than 40 pounds.

### **Fire Safety**

- If the storage room is sprinklered, items must be stored 18 inches below sprinkler head height. Sprinklers will not function properly if they are obstructed. Tape rolls stating "Do Not Store Above This Line" can aid with compliance.
- Maintain a clearance of 36 inches near sources of ignition, such as water heaters and furnaces. Flammable items (chemicals, paper products, plastics, etc.) can ignite quickly and spread.
- Flammable liquids give off vapors that mix with the air to form dangerous gases. Without good ventilation, a small spark can set off the vapors, resulting in a fire. Store items in a fire rated

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# RISK CONTROL CONSULTING

flammable storage cabinet. Know the characteristics of items stored so that flammable liquids are not stored above oxidized materials.

This Tribal First Risk Control Consulting fact sheet is not intended to be exhaustive. The discussion and best practices suggested herein should not be regarded as legal advice. Readers should pursue legal counsel or contact their insurance providers to gain more exhaustive advice.

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