

Reduce Material Handling Costs: Ergonomics to the Rescue

Did you know that the Transportation and Warehousing sector is responsible for 1 in 10 injuries at work, with a direct cost of \$4.38 billion?*

AUSTIN, TX, USA, August 8, 2019 /EINPresswire.com/ -- That's the finding from Liberty Mutual's new 2019 Workplace Safety Index, which identified five types of accidents that are responsible for two-thirds of the injuries in Transportation and Warehousing:

Overexertion involving an outside source
Falls to the same level
Roadway incidents
Other exertions or bodily reactions
Falls to a lower level
What can be done to make packing and shipping stations safer for everyone?

The answer may lie in improved ergonomics.

Unlike Canada and the EU, which have minimum regulatory standards for workplace ergonomics, there aren't any equivalent US Federal requirements. Yet savvy employers know that a relatively small investment in better workplace conditions can reap significant rewards, by increasing employee performance while reducing the incidence of worker compensation claims, such as those due to repetitive strain injuries.

Let's take a look at five specific recommendations.

1. Take A Look At Your [Material Handling](#) Workflow, Is It Really Efficient? Start by making a detailed assessment of your packing and shipping station operations. Here are some things to look for:



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Check if the area is well-lit, organized, clean, and tidy to help reduce slips, trips, and falls. If not, implement the Japanese 5 S process at your facility. If the packer needs to access multiple containers to complete an order, containers are not arriving in the correct sequential order.

If you observe the packer walking away from the shipping station to find an item, something is wrong in the staging process.

Are your packers shipping large cartons filled with very few items? That could drive up storage and transportation costs considerably.

What about fixing packing errors? Create an error correction sequence plan. Allocate enough physical space at the packing station for reboxing.

material handling checklist
The CDC has produced a useful materials handling checklist that can help you create a safer workplace while mitigating the risk of injury.

Did you know, [Formaspace](#) offers a Rapid Plant Assessment (RPA) consulting service? We conduct on-site facility surveys, confidential operator interviews, current state process evaluations, and other valuable continuous improvement insights that will help you increase your packing station efficiency while reducing the risk for worker injuries.

2. Can Your Packing And Shipping Workers Reach Everything They Need For Material Handling Quickly And Efficiently?

Investigate the 'must have' equipment that packers need on hand, including:

Equipment and Automation Tools: Scanner, keyboard, tape shooters, gluers, fill systems, and dunnage dispensers.

Packing Supplies: Envelopes, bags, boxes, labels, pens and markers, void fill material supplies, etc.

Reference Materials: Training materials, reference charts, instructions, signs, charts, etc.

Personal Items: Personal Protective Gear (PPG), jackets, purses, etc.

Rank them by priority, e.g. how often they need to be accessed. (Category 1 items are used constantly. Category 2 items are used quite often. Category 3 items are used infrequently.)

Next, consider the available three-dimensional space surrounding the packing station operator. There is room on the packer's left side, on the right side, above the table, under the table, and behind the packer.



Materials Handling Checklist

Date ___/___/___ Company/Plant _____

Dept _____ Job Name _____

Task Name _____ Evaluator _____

"No" responses indicate potential problem areas that should receive further investigation.

1. Do workers perceive/judge the weights of materials to be lifted acceptable?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
2. Are materials moved over minimum distances?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
3. Is the distance between the lifted item and the body minimized?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
4. Are walking surfaces...		
- ... level?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
- ... wide enough?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
- ... clean and dry?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
5. Are items/materials...		
- easy to grasp?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
- stable?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
- held without slipping?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
6. Are there handholds on these items/materials?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No

Put Category 1 items where they are easiest to get to, then place Category 2 items in the next available areas. The less often used Category 3 items can be stored behind the packer. You can also create storage for bulky or rarely used items that swing or slide out of the way when not in use.

shipping workstation organization

Formaspace created custom distribution center workbenches for a large e-commerce fulfillment and third-party logistics company. The red frame and white worksurface colors are part of the company's corporate branding.

3. Are Your Material Handling Workers Having To Bend Over, Stretch At Odd Angles, Or Lift Heavy Objects?

Protecting workers from short-term or permanent injury is critical. As the Liberty Mutual research above indicates, we need to be on the lookout for ways to reduce accidents that damage the musculature, ligaments, tendons, bones, soft body tissues and nerves (collectively known as Musculoskeletal Disorders, or MSDs for short).

First, shipping stations need to be stable and secure.

Avoid situations where packers need to physically stretch, twist or bend to perform their work.

Make sure materials and cartons are always handled at a safe height.

Remember: Let equipment do the heavy lifting for the worker. Don't locate heavy equipment on a lower shelf that requires the packer to lift it.

If conveyors can't solve the problem, Formaspace can create custom lift tools or elevators to raise, lower, and transport heavy containers.

roller bar scales workstation Custom Packing and Shipping Workstation

Formaspace Can Manufacture A Wide Range Of Solutions For Moving Heavy Objects. Shown Above Left Is A Solution With Rollers Integrated Directly Into The Work Surface. Roller Balls Are Another Excellent Ergonomic Solution (Shown Above Left); These Allow Workers To Easily Move Heavy Items In Multiple Directions.

4. Do You Have Material Handling Employees Of Different Heights And Sizes?

This is a trick question. Workers come in all shapes and sizes, with a wide range of physical and cognitive abilities.

We can help. Formaspace offers shipping station solutions that can be adjusted to accommodate taller and shorter workers. With Formaspace, you can make fast configuration changes during shift changes with no downtime.

Our packing stations can also help accommodate differently-abled workers as well. In fact, design changes required to comply with the Americans With Disabilities Act often provide direct benefits to all employees.

For example, creating wider pathways for wheelchair access that are clear of clutter can help reduce tripping and falling accidents for non-disabled workers as well. And all employees will benefit from flexible, height-adjustable work surfaces.

Why? There is increasing evidence that sitting for long periods of time can be as dangerous to your health as smoking cigarettes. Our variable height packing workstations can help workers change position throughout the day, which can help improve circulation and help reduce lower back injuries.

Read more ... https://formaspace.com/articles/material-handling/reduce-material-handling-costs/?utm_source=einpresswire&utm_medium=content&utm_campaign=article-080719

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