Safety Bulletin: Safe Lifting
September 2025

Attention: Custodians, M&O, Nutrition Services, Teachers, Office Staff, Warehouse

Learning how to lift and carry loads properly may be the most important way to protect yourself from injury on the job. No matter what your size or strength, knowing the proper lifting techniques makes your job easier and safer.

Plan Your Lift

- Evaluate the object to lift. Is it heavy? Awkward to carry? Can you see around it?
- Is its weight evenly distributed and stable?
- Are there sharp edges?
- Review your route: Choose a flat, straight path that is clear of items that could make you trip or slip. Check that the unloading area is clear.

How to Lift

- Stand close to the object with your feet shoulder width apart for balance.
- Bend your knees and lower yourself into a squatting position while keeping your back upright.
- Grip the object firmly with your whole hand. Use your palms, not just your fingers.
- Tighten your stomach muscles and, keeping your back upright, lift with your legs to a standing position. Move in a controlled, steady motion. Jerky motions strain muscles.
- Keep the load close to your body and tuck elbows in close to your body.
- Move slowly and carefully. Pivot to turn, while keeping your feet, hips, and shoulders in the same plane. Do not twist; your head, shoulders and feet should facing forward at all times.
- Face the unloading area and bend your knees to lower the object down. Keep your fingers clear of the bottom. Place the object down near your feet and push or slide it into place. How you put down the load is as important as how you pick it up.
- Split large loads into smaller, easier-to-manage loads.
- Carry long loads on your shoulder with the front end high or get assistance.
- When transferring objects, try to use a pallet or table so you're lifting at waist height.
- Use carts and hand trucks whenever possible. Never hesitate to ask another person for help.
- Consider using a stepstool or stepladder for reaching above shoulder height; avoid over extending.