Throughout the UC system, dining staff are among the occupational groups most at risk for injury. The high frequency and severity of injury is due to the physical nature of the work that often involves awkward postures, repetitive tasks and forceful exertion.

The following Best Practices are offered to guide those responsible for supervising and/or ensuring the health and safety of dining service workers who work in storerooms.

**Best Practices**

Develop vendor contracts to optimize work flow, reduce weight of products, and minimize number of times a product is handled by staff. Include provisions that specify vendors to:

- Schedule deliveries to reduce volume of materials delivered at one time, avoid busy work times, and reduce congestion
- Transport products to desired location in the storeroom, receiving area or alternative areas close to the storeroom
- Deliver products pre-sorted and organized for placement in specified locations using consistent procedures throughout all campus facilities
- Sort and stage products when possible
- Limit size of packaging of heavy items such as rice and meats to reduce the weight. Nothing should exceed 50 pounds.
- Identify weight and volume of products on invoices
- Coordinate vendor delivery training to promote an efficient and consistent process

Develop SOPs (Standard Operating Procedures) to standardize work practices, reduce waste, and optimize work flow

- Create consistent ordering processes to decrease stock rotation and minimize waste. Include input from executive chef, cooks and storeroom manager.
- Maintain consistent storeroom floor plan and storage procedures (i.e. organize products based on type, frequency of use, or recipe)
- Maintain consistent work procedures between dining facilities to optimize utilization of staff, and promote consistent vendor delivery practices
Organize storerooms to reduce lifting and postural demands on staff

- Provide adequate space to store products and allow use and storage of material handling equipment.
- Select shelving appropriate for products stored (see product recommendation sheet)
  - Provide durable, height adjustable shelving with lockable casters
  - Select depth of shelving to match size of products stored on shelf
  - Provide flat shelves to facilitate sliding of heavy bags, and lipless shelves to eliminate need to lift heavy products over lip
  - Provide corner shelving to optimize space and improve ability to reach products
  - Use specialty racks for products such as cans
- Store products based on type of product, weight, and frequency of use
  - Place lighter products on top and bottom shelves
  - Place heavy materials in the middle section of shelving (between chest and knee level) and at least 12 inches from the floor
  - Date items to facilitate ease of rotation of products when necessary (try to limit over-ordering of products to limit need to rotate)
  - Label shelves to improve organization and ability to retrieve products
- Store items in boxes in which they are received when possible. Cut off top of boxes to access products.
- Limit height of beverage and milk cases to avoid lifting above shoulder level
- Use material handling equipment and procedures to eliminate or reduce lifting demands on staff
  - Use electric forklifts, pallet jacks, hand trucks and carts to transport products to storeroom (see product recommendation sheet)
  - Use automated lifters to move product within the storeroom (see product recommendation sheet)
  - Provide doors and aisles that allow use of electric forklifts, pallet jacks and hand trucks for moving material into and around storerooms
  - Utilize ladders, step stools, and promote use of two person lifts for items above shoulder level (see product recommendation sheet)
  - Label heavy items with two person lift signage
- Provide employees with appropriate PPE (Personal Protective Equipment) for tasks (i.e. freezer jackets and gloves, aprons and safety glasses). Train staff in application, use and storage of PPE (see product recommendation sheet).

**Equipment**

Selecting the most appropriate equipment is an important decision. Prior to purchasing:

- Contact the campus ergonomist to help with the selection process
- Include dining staff in the selection process
- Arrange for demonstration of product by manufacturer or distributor
- Refer to the Ergonomics Recommended Product Sheet for applications and recommendations
• Pilot the preferred equipment for a minimum two–week trial period

During the pilot period, consider the following:
• Adjustability, size and weight of equipment to accommodate wide range of body types
• Appropriate sized casters and swivel design to allow for easy rolling and maneuverability
• Location of controls and ease of operation
• Storage and transporting needs
• Equipment maintenance and replacement parts
• Battery life and charging time
• Need for back-up equipment

Training
Initial training should be provided for new employees within the first 30 days of hiring and annually thereafter. Training is best provided in small groups with the involvement of supervisors, leads, ergonomists and vendors.
Training should include:
• Hands-on performance of job tasks and related activities
• Equipment use, maintenance, storage, safety procedures and use of personal protective equipment (PPE) as required
• Instruction on safe postures and body mechanics
• Verbal and/or written materials to accommodate non-English speaking workers

Work and Staffing Guidelines
Work and staffing guidelines ensure that employees are adequately trained and assigned reasonable workloads. Guidelines include:
• Staff levels that provide adequate coverage to complete assigned work tasks
• Staff levels to avoid overtime.
• Back-up staffing to accommodate unplanned absences
• Back-up staffing for scheduled storekeeper absences
• Identify staff with authority to enter storerooms to manage flow of personnel and supplies.
• Schedule deliveries based on loading dock usage, staffing, size of storeroom and volume of supplies used. Avoid scheduling deliveries during peak work times
• Incorporate frequent rest breaks into work schedule.
• Organize work to promote task and job rotation to limit repetition and fatigue
• Organize work and placement of supplies to avoid double moving of items.
• Consider use of multi-person chain to move products to shelves.
• Mandate team-lifting concepts to lift and move heavy items.
• Promote pre-shift stretching/exercise program to warm up muscles to prepare for work
• Implement and support a work hazard notification system to identify ergonomic problems
References


