

# Storing supplies and equipment in early childhood education and care.

## What is the problem?

Workers in the early childhood education and care sector experience musculoskeletal injuries (eg sprains, strains, fractures and soft tissue injuries) from moving supplies and equipment in storage areas.

## What are the risks?

Workers may be at risk of injuries from:

- Tripping or falling due to overcrowded or poorly designed storage areas.
- Being hit by falling objects due to unstable or insufficient shelving.
- Bending, twisting and exerting high or unexpected force due to manually lifting, moving or carrying objects.
- Bending and reaching due to placement of objects above shoulder height or below knee height.
- No ladders or step platforms available to access higher shelves.
- Poorly maintained or inappropriate ladders.
- No aids available to move supplies or equipment (eg trolleys).

## What are solutions to the problems?

Risk control measures that can be adopted include:

### Systems

Develop systems of work that:

- Regularly review supplies and equipment in storage areas, and discard objects that do not need to be retained or have not been used within a designated timeframe (eg 12 months).
- Provide a layout plan of where specific items should be placed in storage areas.
- Identify and label the weight, size and handling instructions for stored objects (eg whether object must be stored in a specific place and whether it should be moved with an appropriate aid such as a trolley).
- Provide workers with information, instruction and supervision on documented work procedures and use of equipment and aids.
- Provide reporting processes so safety issues can be identified and fixed as soon as possible.
- Schedule and record regular inspections and maintenance of all areas of the workplace and all equipment.

### Equipment

- Fix shelving to the floor and walls of the storage area
- Use shelving with a safe working load limit (designated by the manufacturer) and do not exceed this weight limit.
- Maintain shelving and replace any shelving that is cracked, loose or damaged.
- Store objects in smaller containers to avoid having to lift and balance heavy loads.
- Use lightweight, sturdy, stackable containers with wheels and handles to store or move objects.
- Store stretcher beds where they can be easily accessed, allowing them to be moved in and out of storage, stacked and unstacked without risk of awkward postures of workers.
- Maintain storage area doors so they can be easily opened and closed by workers.
- Design and provide specific storage areas for outdoor or larger equipment.
- If an outdoor storage shed is used, fix the shed securely to the ground.

### Task

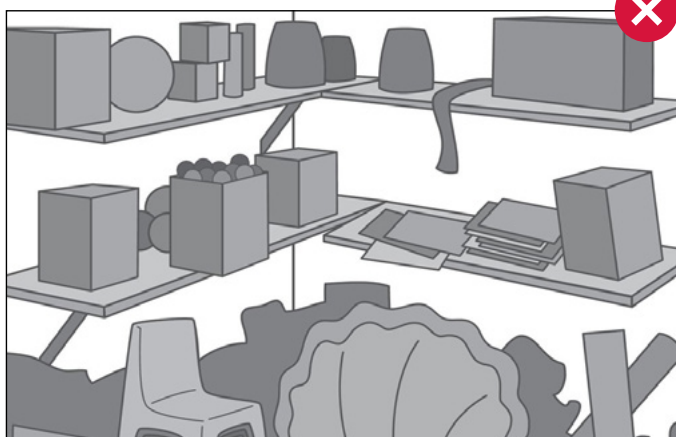
- Place items frequently used in easy-to-access shelves between shoulder and knee height.
- Store heavier objects between knee and shoulder height rather than at floor level or overhead.
- Match items stored to available shelving size, space and depth. Avoid overcrowding objects or stacking objects on top of each other.
- Separate flammables, paints and chemicals from other stored objects.
- Separate storage of maintenance equipment (eg lawnmowers) from play equipment.
- Use ladders or step platforms to access higher shelves. For example:
  - if a ladder is needed, select the most appropriate ladder for the task (industrial/domestic rating, height, base width) step platforms provide a larger, more stable work surface than ladders
  - place ladders or step platforms squarely on firm, non-slip surfaces

- maintain three points of contact (eg two feet and at least one hand or two hands and at least one foot) when ascending, descending or standing on ladders
- inspect ladders or step platforms regularly. Repair or replace ladders where rungs, steps, treads or top plates are missing, worn, damaged or loose
- stand no higher than the second tread below the top plate of ladders
- store step platforms or ladders where workers can easily access them when required. Milk crates, chairs, boxes or play equipment should not be used to reach higher objects.

#### If mezzanine floors are used for storage

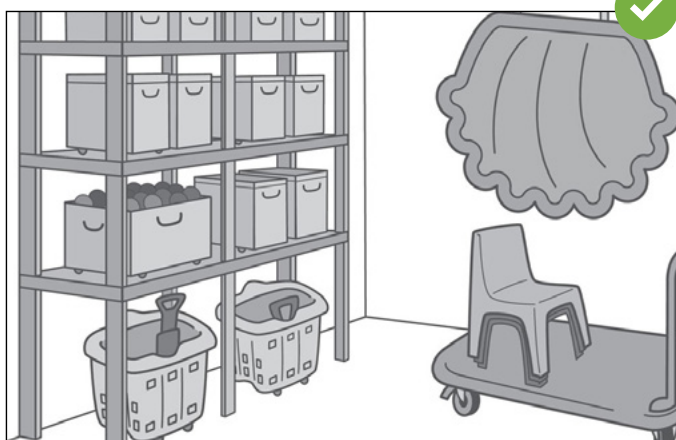
- Store items within the safe working load limit of the mezzanine floor.
- Access the mezzanine floor by stairs with handrails, not a ladder.
- Provide handrails and toe boards around the perimeter of mezzanine floors to prevent people or objects from falling.

#### The problem



Overcrowded storage area with poorly maintained shelves. Heavy objects are placed above shoulder height. Inadequate access for trolleys or step platforms/ladders.

#### A solution



Shelving that is maintained, secured to the wall and has a safe working load that is not exceeded. Objects are stored in lightweight, sturdy, stackable containers with wheels and handles. Adequate space for trolleys or step platforms/ladders.

## Further Information

### SafeWork NSW

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safework.nsw.gov.au

### Related SafeWork NSW Health and Safety Solutions

- [Using cots, highchairs and change tables in early childhood education and care.](#)
- [Moving equipment in early childhood education and care.](#)
- [Using office areas in early childhood education and care.](#)
- [Maintaining indoor and outdoor areas in early childhood education and care.](#)

### SafeWork NSW Publications

Search the below SafeWork NSW publication titles on safework.nsw.gov.au

- [Hazardous manual tasks, code of practice](#)
- [Manual Tasks](#)
- [Falls safety Guide](#)
- [Ladders](#)
- [Healthcare and social assistance](#)

### Australian Standards

AS 1657: 2018, Fixed platforms, walkways, stairways and ladders – Design, construction and installation

AS/NZS 1892.5:2020, Portable ladders – Selection, safe use and care

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