

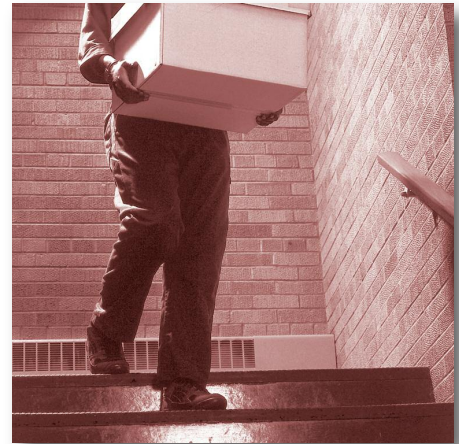
# risk alert



Listening. | Learning. | Leading.®

## 4.3 million workers are injured on the job each year

Almost 25 percent of worker injuries at religious organizations insured by Church Mutual involve a lifting or strain injury. It's easy to overlook the possibility of a worker or volunteer being injured while at your facility, but there is potential for a painful occurrence—especially one involving lifting, such as a back strain or the development of a long-term health problem. However, there are steps you can take to ensure that all of your employees and volunteers are cautious in their work and that they know how to properly perform their duties. It is also important to realize that some workers, such as those in the custodial field, are at greater risk for experiencing strains and other lifting injuries at work.



A study from the Bureau of Labor Statistics shows that the custodial field has the sixth highest count of worker injuries in the nation. Many of those injuries result from repeated exposure to a number of risk factors, which can cause fatigue or discomfort, or an injury to the back, shoulders, wrists or other body parts.

## Know and reduce the risks your workers are exposed to

Use these steps to help eliminate the main risk factors for a lifting-related injury from your organization's work environment:

- Forceful exertions. Check the weight of an object before you attempt to lift it, in order to prepare yourself for the effort. Always get help from a co-worker(s) if you are unsure of your ability to lift an object.
- Awkward working postures. Keep your feet, knees and torso pointed in the same direction and keep your back straight when lifting or moving with an object. Perform within your "power zone": above your knees, below your shoulders and close to your body. Use your leg muscles, not your back, to lift smoothly without jerking. Then, move close to the location where you want to set the item down, rather than reaching for the destination.
- Repetitive motions. If possible, rotate tasks while working or do something that requires less physical effort in between the more strenuous duties.
- Pressure points (i.e., leaning against parts or surfaces). Ask for help if you are unable to lift an object without supporting yourself with something that could cause an injury.

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- Poor environmental conditions (i.e., working outdoors in the winter). If you must work in these conditions, limit the amount of time you spend in them and take frequent breaks for recovery.

## **Doing your part**

In addition to teaching others about safety practices, your organization can do its part by verifying and enhancing the ergonomic conditions of your workplace:

- Assess current work equipment and processes for workers' safety.
- If necessary, rearrange, modify, redesign and provide or replace tools, equipment, workstations or processes.
- When repetitive motion and/or overexertion are a concern, adjust work schedules, work paces and/or work practices if possible.
- Provide adequate recovery/break times for workers.
- Hold group discussions to solve labor-involved problems and review any prior accidents.
- Provide hands-on practice for unfamiliar and new duties and equipment.

Combine these simple steps with the information above and always keep your employees' and volunteers' safety at the top of your list, and you'll be sure to have less strains and pains from lifting in no time.

For more information on how you can prevent more types of work-related injuries, see "Safety Begins With People," from Church Mutual's Protection Series booklets.

**For a complete collection of the Risk Alert series, visit our Web site and look in the Safety Resources section.**