

GROCERY CASHIERS



Poor workstation design can cause pain and injuries.

*Serving
Customers
Shouldn't
Hurt You*

INSIDE:

- ▶ Causes and Symptoms of Injuries
- ▶ Ways to Work Safely



A workstation design that helps to prevent injuries.

OCTOBER 2006

Is Your Job Causing You Pain?

- ▶ **Pain, numbness, burning, or tingling in the hands, wrists, elbows, shoulders, back or legs** affect many grocery cashiers. These symptoms may be related to your job.

- ▶ **Symptoms may start gradually.** Many people try to ignore them at first. However, if you ignore them, symptoms can get worse and become harder to treat. Symptoms may occur at night, but still be work-related. Even if the symptoms go away during vacation, or on your days off, it doesn't necessarily mean the condition is gone. Inform your employer and get medical care right away if you have symptoms.

- ▶ **These symptoms may indicate serious injuries** and may interfere with your work and personal activities. They can even lead to permanent disability.



Why Do Grocery Cashiers Have These Problems?

- ▶ **Uncomfortable work positions** can be caused by poor workstation design and unsafe work procedures. Twisting and bending your wrists to scan, reaching too far to get items to weigh or scan, stooping to bag groceries, and twisting to face customers can all lead to pain and injury.

- ▶ **Repeated and forceful motions.** Examples include reaching, scanning, keying, grasping items by pinching them with your fingers, lifting heavy items with one hand, and lifting items over the scanner—over and over, all day long. Each motion can cause small injuries to muscles and joints.

- ▶ **Long work hours and few breaks** mean less time for muscle and joint injuries to heal.

- ▶ **A high stress work environment with little employee control in some stores.** This includes feeling forced to scan fast because customers are annoyed about long waits, being pressured to get high scores on store-initiated shopper evaluations, and feeling afraid to report symptoms because of “no injury” incentive policies.

How Can Injuries Be Prevented?

By law, your employer is responsible for providing a safe and healthful workplace. Here are some things your employer and you can do to prevent injuries.

- ▶ **Talk with others at work.** Do workers have symptoms? Are the causes of injury present? Does the employer or manager know about preventive actions?
- ▶ **Provide workstations designed to prevent injury.** Consider these recommended features:
 - **Front-facing checkstands** that balance the workload between both hands. Other designs can be converted easily to front-facing.
 - **In-feed and take-away conveyor belts** placed as close as possible to the cashier to keep reaches to 18 inches or less.
 - **Scanners close to cashiers** with surfaces that promote “scan and slide” motions instead of lifting items over the scanner. Keep scanner windows clean and replace glass when excessively scratched.
 - **Scanner-scale combinations or scales next to scanners** flush with scanner tops.
 - **Adjustable keyboard mounting.**
 - **Visual displays that cashiers can see without twisting.**
 - **Printers located in front of cashiers or within easy reach.**
 - **Cash drawers within an 18-inch reach distance.**
 - **Adjustable-height bag stands.**
 - **Foot rests or foot rails.**
 - **Anti-fatigue mats with beveled edges** (for safety). Replace mats as needed.
 - **Adjustable sit/stands or lumbar supports** for cashiers to lean against.
- ▶ **Inspect workstations regularly and provide maintenance as needed.**
- ▶ **Provide training that includes demonstrations on safe work procedures.** See page 5.
- ▶ **Rest your body.** Take tiny breaks during lag times. Take scheduled breaks.
- ▶ **Provide training on the causes of injuries and early symptoms.**



Taking Action to Prevent Injuries

- ▶ **Form a safety committee.** It can be a big help in keeping your workplace safe. Get key people from both labor and management to participate. A successful committee is one that has strong employer support. An experienced ergonomic consultant can provide technical assistance. Here's what a safety committee can do:
 - Talk to workers and inspect jobs to find conditions that can cause injuries.
 - Encourage workers to report work-related injuries and symptoms to their supervisor.
 - Identify the jobs that have caused injuries.
 - Figure out how particular jobs may be causing injuries.
 - Develop practical solutions and recommend that management try them out on a few individuals.
 - Check to see if the changes are effective before recommending them for all affected jobs.
 - Monitor employees using new equipment and/or making other job changes.

What Does the Law Say?

- ▶ **Your employer may have to follow a California rule about repetitive work. Find out:**
 - Were two or more workers injured within the last 12 months? The injured workers must have done the same type of work.
 - Did a doctor report that each injury is mainly caused by the job? Each worker can have a different diagnosis, as long as it's related to the same kind of repetitive work.
- ▶ **If the answer to both questions is "Yes," the employer must change the work or equipment to prevent injuries.** Worker training also is required.

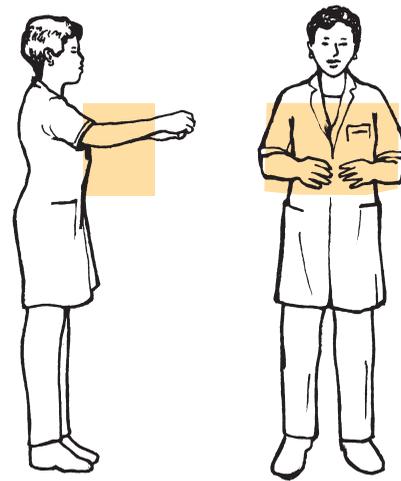
This rule is called Repetitive Motion Injuries (General Industry Safety Order 5110). It is enforced by Cal/OSHA.

What is Cal/OSHA? It is California's Division of Occupational Safety and Health. This government agency investigates workers' complaints and answers questions about workplace safety rules. Complaints are confidential. Find the phone number in the blue Government Pages near the front of the phone book. Look under: State of California, Industrial Relations, Division of Occupational Safety and Health, Compliance or Enforcement.

For employers, California has the Consultation Service (**1-800-963-9424**). This agency explains workplace health and safety regulations, and helps employers comply with them. They do not cite or impose fines.

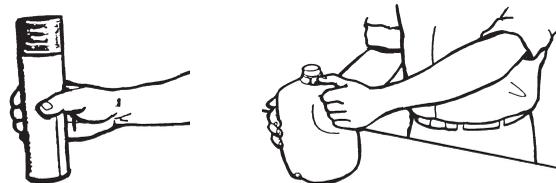
Training Tips for Working Safely

- ▶ **Reaching out to get something or handing something to a customer.**
Try to stay within your preferred safety zone. **Reach only as far forward as your wrist is** when your arm is slightly bent, **as wide as your shoulders**, as **high as your heart**, and as **low as your waist**.



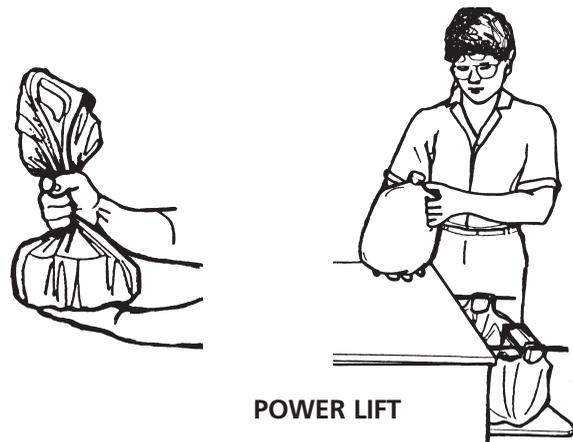
SAFE REACH ZONE

- ▶ **Grasping items.**
Use the one- or two-handed **power grip**. Grasp the bulk of the item with all four fingers and your thumb using the hand closest to the item. Grasp a heavy or bulky item with both hands.



POWER GRIP

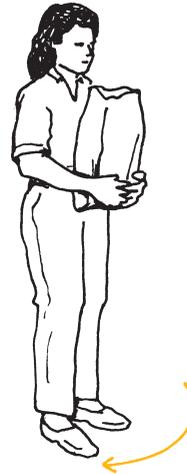
- ▶ **Lifting small items.**
Use the **power lift**. Grasp the top of the item with one hand using the **power grip**. With the other hand, support the item underneath. **Avoid lifting with just one hand.**



POWER LIFT

▶ **Holding and lifting heavy or bulky items.**

1. Hold the item close to your body—within your safety zone.
2. Keep your body facing forward and the item in front of you.
3. Keep your back straight.
4. Use your legs to do the lifting.
5. Use your feet to turn your whole body if you have to turn.



▶ **Setting down a heavy item.**

1. Move close to the place where you're going to put the item before setting it down.
2. Use your legs to lower your body and the item.



▶ **Using alternatives to lifting heavy or bulky items.**

Use hand-held scanning wands or guns, key enter UPCs. Ask the customer to lift a heavy item left in the cart, or ask a co-worker or manager to help you lift it.

▶ **Unloading items.**

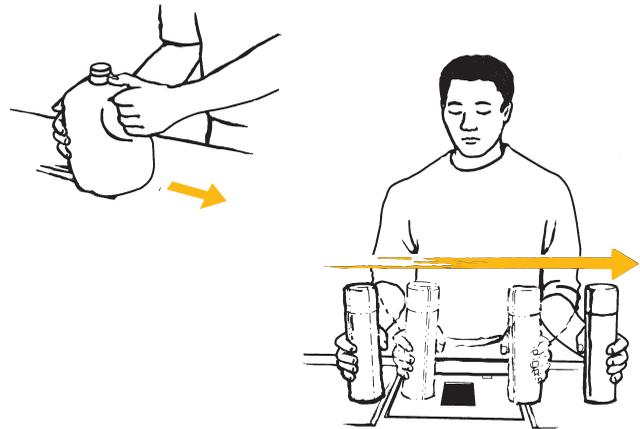
Let conveyor belts bring the items to you. Don't reach out for them. Wait until they're in your safety zone.

▶ **Weighing items.**

Use both hands equally. Slide items onto and off the scale.

▶ **Scanning items.**

Use the **power slide** to move items through the scan zone. Grasp the item using the **power grip**. Begin sliding the item by the scanner. As you begin sliding the item with one hand, take it with the other hand and move it the rest of the way past the scanner. Move items straight by the scanner, keeping your wrists relatively straight.



POWER SLIDE

▶ **Keying in data.**

Keep your wrists relatively straight. Press the keys lightly.

▶ **Bagging items.**

Adjust the height of the bagwell so that you can stand up straight. Distribute the weight evenly in the bags.

▶ **Handing bags to a customer.**

Pick up each bag using the **power grip**. Keep the bag close to your body. Walk around the checkstand to put an item or bag into the customer's cart.

For More Information...

- ▶ **HESIS (Hazard Evaluation System and Information Service).** www.dhs.ca.gov/ohb
Answers questions about workplace hazards and has many free publications available.

For information on workplace hazards: Toll free (866) 282-5516. Please leave a message and your call will be returned.

For HESIS Publications: Toll free (866) 627-1586

- **HESIS Publications List.** Pamphlets and fact sheets on workplace hazards including chemicals, repetitive motion, and infectious diseases. Visit our website, call or write for the list. A guide for health care providers treating work-related musculoskeletal disorders is also available.
- ▶ **Workers' Compensation.** If you are injured on the job, or work makes an existing injury worse, you may have a right to receive benefits such as medical care, wage replacement and retraining (if a job change is needed). Benefits are available to all workers, including immigrants, part-time and temporary workers. Call **1-800-736-7401** for more information and for free fact sheets for injured workers, in English and Spanish.
- ▶ **Cal/OSHA Consultation Service.** Helps employers to improve safety and health conditions without triggering enforcement inspections. Call **1-800-963-9424** for assistance and for *Easy Ergonomics* and other materials.
- ▶ **Food Marketing Institute.** www.fmi.org A non-profit organization conducting programs in research, education, industry relations and public affairs on behalf of food retailers, wholesalers and their customers.
- ▶ **United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) International Union, AFL-CIO/CLC.** www.ufcw.org.
- ▶ **Other publications about ergonomics and safety for grocery cashiers.**

Working Smart in the Retail Environment, Food Marketing Institute **(202) 220-0723**. \$50 (non-members).

Proper Scanning Methods for Supermarket Cashiers (Video). Food Marketing Institute **(202) 220-0723**. \$100 (non-members).

Retail Safety and Health Fact Pack, United Food and Commercial Workers International Union, 1775 K St., NW, Washington, DC 20006-1598, **(202) 223-3111** (ask for Occupational Safety and Health Department).

ABOUT THIS FACT SHEET. This publication was produced by HESIS, the Hazard Evaluation System and Information Service, Department of Health Services and Department of Industrial Relations, State of California. We gratefully acknowledge assistance from the United Food and Commercial Workers International Union in helping to organize a local focus group and the Food Marketing Institute in granting permission to adapt published educational material. The information in this fact sheet, however, does not necessarily reflect the views and policies of these organizations.

The recommendations in this fact sheet were developed by HESIS based on our evaluation of research studies and published information, and on general ergonomic principles. They may not be appropriate for every grocery store or individual grocery cashier.

This publication may be copied in its entirety for educational use.

Arnold Schwarzenegger, Governor
State of California
Kimberly Belshé, Secretary
California Health and Human Services Agency
Victoria L. Bradshaw, Secretary
Labor and Workforce Development Agency
Sandra Shewry, Director
California Department of Health Services
John Rea, Acting Director
Department of Industrial Relations



HESIS

**HAZARD EVALUATION SYSTEM
& INFORMATION SERVICE**
California Department of Health Services
Occupational Health Branch
850 Marina Bay Parkway, Building P, 3rd Floor
Richmond, CA 94804
(510) 620-5757 • www.dhs.ca.gov/ohb