



# Safety Bulletin: Lifting Awkward Loads

## March 2026

Attention: M&O, Custodial, School Staff, Risk Management

Proper lifting techniques help prevent strains, sprains, and other injuries. The standard safe lifting method—bending your knees, keeping the load close, and using the strong muscles in your legs—works well in many situations. However, some items such as odd-shaped objects, overhead materials, or items stored in bins and containers require modified lifting techniques.

**In any lifting situation, remember these key safety principles:**

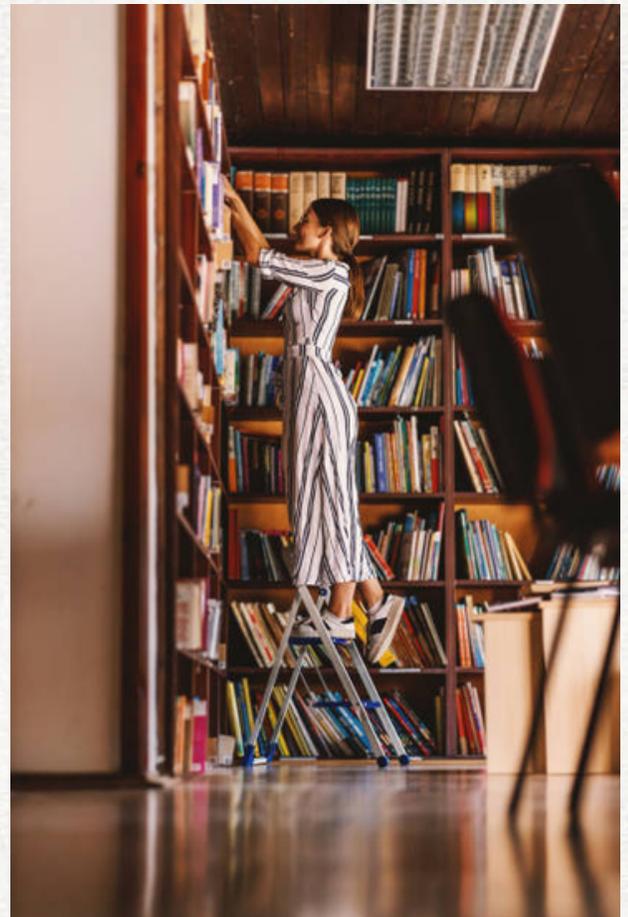
- Keep the load close to your body.
- Avoid bending at the waist.
- Do not extend your upper body excessively.
- Avoid twisting while lifting or carrying.
- Ask for assistance or use mechanical aids when needed.

### ***Lifting Overhead Loads***



Retrieving items stored above shoulder height can increase strain on the back, shoulders, and arms.

- Use a step stool or ladder to bring the load closer to a comfortable lifting height and avoid overreaching.
- Test the weight of the object first before removing it completely from the shelf.
- If possible, slide the item toward you and hold it close to your body as you bring it down.
- When available, hand the item down to a coworker rather than lowering it alone.



### ***Lifting Odd-Sized Loads***



Odd-shaped items can shift your balance and increase the risk of injury.

- Long objects such as pipes, lumber, or tools can be awkward to handle. When carrying these items, support the load on your shoulder, keeping the front end slightly higher than the rear.
- If a load requires two people, both individuals should carry the object on the same shoulder side and keep the load level while moving.
- Whenever possible, use mechanical assistance (carts, dollies, or lifting devices) or ask a coworker for help.
- Be sure the load does not block your field of vision while walking.

# Reaching Bins and Containers



Items stored deep in bins, trunks, or containers can encourage unsafe bending.

- Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart. Bend your knees and squat by bending at the hips, not the waist—similar to sitting down in a chair.
- Slide the object as close to your body as possible before lifting.
- Lift using the muscles of your legs and hips, not your back.
- Tighten your abdominal muscles for additional support while lifting.
- If possible, rest your knees against the side of the container for added stability.
- Avoid twisting your body while lifting or turning.

For lighter objects:

- You may brace one hand on the edge of the container while reaching with the other hand.
- Push down with the supporting hand to help bring your body upright—do not rely on your back muscles to lift.

**Remember:** If a load feels too heavy, awkward, or unsafe to lift alone, stop and get help. Preventing injuries protects you and helps keep our schools running safely.

