

With any kitchen, food enters the facility in large boxes, bags, and containers. With the large quantities of food produced in the kitchen, it's inevitable that a sizeable portion of the job is manual material handling. When the shipment is received, boxes must be carried to the walk-in/pantry area, items must be unboxed, and old food must be rotated. This requires manual material handling in a space that's usually small and congested.

Organizing your storage: When planning your storage, eliminate specifically hazardous lifts that'll increase the likelihood of employee injuries. Ensure that when lifting items more than 25 pounds the hands can be within the **Best Work Zone** (pictured to the right). Placing frequently used and heavier items in the **Best Work Zone** promotes the safest lift while working in the **Acceptable Work Zone** also offers protection to a lesser extent.

Here are some helpful tips to reduce employee injuries due to kitchen storage:

- Avoid storing items outside of the Safe Work Zone (above shoulder level) unless they're less than 10 pounds.
- Avoid storing loads outside the Acceptable Work Zone (below knee level), such as on the floor, as this sets the worker up for a bent back and a strained lift, increasing the risk of injury.
- Avoid storing items in front of storage areas such as shelves or cabinets as this requires staff to reach their arms outside of the Acceptable Work Zone, making a dangerous lift.
- Label items that are more than 25 pounds with a bright colored sticker or a red "X" to ensure staff are aware of the weight.
- For deep storage of heavy items of uniform shapes such as number 10 cans, provide gravity-fed shelves within the Acceptable Work Zones.
- Use bulk containers on wheels for dispensing ingredients to avoid repetitive lifting of heavy bags and boxes.



After the kitchen storage organization has been optimized, focus on placing and retrieving kitchen goods.

Tips to make moving product safer:

- Ensure there's adequate lighting.
- Ensure floors are dry and clean.
- Install high-friction adhesive flooring strips on sloped surfaces or those areas prone to condensation. Be especially mindful of cooler/freezer door thresholds where ice can develop as pictured.
- Maintain aisles wide enough to allow employees to walk and bend without awkward posture when retrieving items.
- Provide carts and dollies for employees to use to transport goods.
- Provide step stools to retrieve items from high shelves. Step stools should have an appropriate duty rating, non-slip surface, and slip-resistant feet. They should also sit level on the floor and allow users to reach items without reaching outside of the Safe Work Zones or standing on tippy toes.
- When receiving product that contains multiple items:
 - Upon delivery, unbox and store each individual item on the shelf. If you store the whole case, you are requiring the next worker to pull it down to remove only the item needed and then return the rest to the shelf. This requires the heavy case to be lifted multiple times and moves the lift out of the Safe Work Zones.
 - As an alternative, shelve the case and then cut the front portion to provide access.
- Encourage workers to slide items before lifting to ensure they're aware of the weight.

