

Relieving the stress and strains of distribution

Here are 10 tips for improving worker comfort within your distribution facility.

Good workers are becoming a scarce commodity in many distribution centers. Taking care of them should be a priority. That's where good ergonomics come in. Equipment designed to reduce walking, bending, reaching, and strain not only boosts worker productivity, but also helps reduce injuries and workers' compensation claims. Here are 10 types of products and systems that are designed to protect the health and safety of your most valuable asset: your employees.



1 Goods-to-person systems bring products to workers, eliminating the need for associates to roam the aisles to retrieve items. These systems can save time, boost productivity, and greatly reduce worker fatigue. Goods-to-person systems can be a particular plus in frozen and refrigerated operations, where they may be used to ferry products from temperature-controlled areas to workers located in less-frigid work zones.

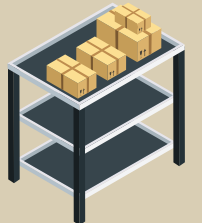
2 Slotting software can position the fastest-moving products in racks and shelves within the "golden zone" between a worker's knees and shoulders. Positioning products within this range greatly reduces the need for reaching and bending.

3 Ergonomic flooring and cushioned work mats help relieve discomfort and fatigue for workers whose jobs require them to walk or stand on a hard concrete surface for a full shift.

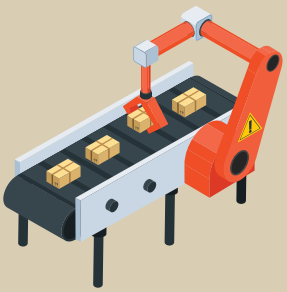
4 Back and arm braces help protect employees who do a lot of lifting, like workers who stack pallets or load trucks. New technology is emerging that includes built-in power-assist motors for braces worn on the arms and legs. These are designed to help workers move heavy loads and to reduce overall fatigue.



5 Tilt and lift tables position materials and products at an ergonomic height to reduce reaching and bending motions. The tables can automatically adjust to the individual operator's needs, and the surfaces can be tilted slightly to provide better product visibility and access.



6 Robots are now available in many forms, including models that are designed to work alongside humans. These include bots with articulating arms that retrieve items for order pickers and wheeled robots that fetch products for workers at processing stations.

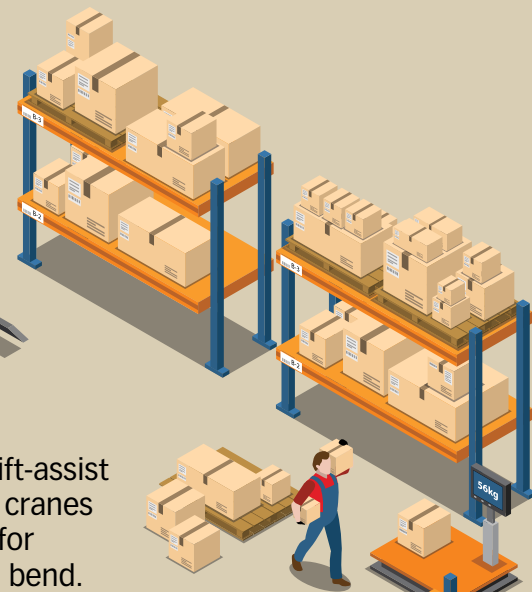


7 Flow racks keep products within easy reach. The racks' shelves are tilted, with small wheels to propel products to the front of the rack for easy access, eliminating the need for workers to reach and lift.

8 Voice and pick-to-light systems provide audio or visual picking instructions to workers, leaving their hands free for picking tasks. These systems eliminate the need for associates to juggle paper lists or scanners while selecting items for orders.



9 Work positioners like lift-assist devices and overhead cranes help reduce the need for employees to lift, reach, and bend.



10 Overhead fans as well as smaller fans placed within picking areas help workers keep their cool. When properly positioned, they provide welcome air circulation and exchange, while maintaining comfortable working temperatures from floor to ceiling.

