

WORKING AS A CASHIER

Cashiers are at risk for many painful muscles and joint injuries, hazards due to noise, and possibly a quick pace of work.



Hazard: Poor Workstation Layout

Details

The workstation surface is too low or too high for you. Placement of workstation components (conveyor belt, scanner, cash register, keyboard and scale) forces you to: twist your body to pick up and scan items, or stand in an awkward, static posture (i.e., standing in the same position for a long time without moving)

Threat

- Back pain
- Carpal tunnel syndrome
- Bursitis, sprains, and strains in your shoulders, arms, and hands
- Tendonitis in your shoulder, elbows, and wrists
- Tenosynovitis in your hands and wrists

Safe Work Guidelines

- Report any early warning signs of any muscle or joint disorders to your supervisor
- If you have any symptoms of a muscle and joint disorder, get early treatment
- Tell your supervisor, joint health and safety committee member, or health and safety rep about any problems and pain you are having related to your workstation
- Ask if the workstation layout and design can be changed, including:
 - layout (e.g., front-facing, side-facing, left- or right-handed, right-hand takeaway, over-the-counter checkouts, etc.)
 - height of the work surface
 - scanner type (e.g., bioptic scanner)
 - scale
 - conveyor belt
 - standing or sitting format
- Adjust your workstation to fit your physical needs
- Adjust the bag rack so that the bottom of the rack is at or above your knee level and the top of the rack is close to the counter level
- Adjust the positions of the scale, scanner, and keyboard so that they are comfortable for you
- Keep your wrists straight and avoid reaching above or behind your shoulder
- Keep the floor of your workstation clear of waste materials so that you do not trip
- If liquid spills, wipe it up immediately

Hazard: Improper Scanning Techniques

Details

Improper scanning techniques include twisting your wrist, scanning with one hand, and picking up objects with your fingers rather than your entire hand. Other problems related to scanning include overreaching for items, and bending or twisting at your wrist to retrieve items.

Threat

- Back pain
- Carpal tunnel syndrome
- Bursitis, sprains, and strains in your shoulders, arms, and hands
- Tendonitis in your shoulder, elbows, and wrists
- Tenosynovitis in your hands and wrists

Safe Work Guidelines

- Make sure that you have been fully trained in good scanning techniques
- Learn the locations of the universal product code (UPC) so that you can find the UPC and then scan the item
- Stand or sit as close as possible to your work
- Grasp items with your whole hand, not just your thumb and index finger
- Try to alternate between hands when scanning so one side of your body is not overworked
- If possible, face the customer when you are scanning items – this reduces how much you need to twist and reach
- Keep your wrist straight when scanning
- Make sure your equipment is properly maintained:
 - Keep your scanner clean to avoid having to scan items several times
 - Report any problems with UPCs

Hazard: Handling Large, Heavy, Awkward Items

Details

Heavy items may be lifted, lowered, or handled in the wrong way. Bags may be filled too full. When handling heavy items, you may have to stretch too far, bend at the waist, and twist or reach behind your back.

Threat

- Back pain
- Carpal tunnel syndrome
- Bursitis, sprains, and strains in your shoulders, arms, and hands
- Tendonitis in your shoulder, elbows, and wrists
- Tenosynovitis in your hands and wrists

Safe Work Guidelines

When You Are Scanning Heavy or Awkward Items

- Use a hand-held scanner
- To look for the price or the UPC, turn heavy items on the conveyor – do not lift the item
- Slide a heavy item across the scanner rather than lifting it
- Ask your manager to make a list of the UPCs for heavy items (e.g., cases of pop or water) – then, rather than scanning the item:
 - Scan the UPC from the list, or
 - Type in the UPC from the item

When You Are Handling Heavy Items

- If the workstation has a conveyor, let it bring the items to you – do not stretch to reach for the items
- Use 2 hands to lift and lower heavy items

- When you are moving a heavy box, pull it close to your body, then lift it or, if possible, use handles to lift it
- To handle heavy objects, face the object, bend your knees (if necessary) and lift – do not twist your body or bend over at the waist
- Give filled bags to the customer to place in the shopping cart
- When handling heavy items, stand – do not sit

Hazard: Standing Still for Long Periods

Details

Standing is a static posture which can lead to back problems and muscle and joint injuries.

Threat

- Back pain
- Leg pain
- Damage to your tendons, muscles, other connective tissue or the discs in your back

Safe Work Guidelines

- Avoid standing in positions that make you turn your head often or hold your head tilted for long periods of time
- Shift your weight occasionally from one foot to the other
- Use a footrest or a rail to rest your foot and change the resting foot from time to time
- Ask your manager for an anti-fatigue mat:
 - Keep the mat clean because dusty mats can slip
 - Ask to have a worn-out mat replaced
- Consider a sit-stand stool to lean on to take some weight off your feet, but don't sit on it like a chair, especially while lifting

Hazard: Unsuitable Shoes

Details

You need to wear the right footwear for you and your job to ensure that your feet are comfortable and that you can work safely.

Threat

- Foot pain and fatigue
- Back pain
- Injury caused by slipping and falling

Safe Work Guidelines

- Wear shoes that:
 - Support your foot properly
 - Allow you to wiggle your toes
 - Grip your heel firmly – if the back of your shoe is too wide or soft, your foot will slip
 - Have low heels and non-slip soles
 - Lace up so that you can loosen the laces if your feet swell
 - Are comfortable
- Make sure that you are wearing the right footwear for your job – check the soles for uneven wearing and have your gait assessed by a health professional, if necessary
- Do not wear tight-fitting socks that cut off circulation at your knee, calf, or ankle
- If possible, wear cotton socks
- Make sure that your socks fit properly
- If you need support pantyhose, wear it

Hazard: Pace of Work

Details

Your work pace may be too fast or it may include no or too few breaks. Problems with work pace may occur if you are not given time to adjust after returning from an illness or vacation.

Threat

- Fatigue and stress
- Pain
- Possible physical injuries caused by fatigue or working too quickly

Safe Work Guidelines

- Adopt a comfortable work pace:
 - tell your supervisor or manager if you feel that you have to work too quickly
 - during peak times or when customer line-ups are forming, ask your supervisor to open more checkout stations
 - after an illness or vacation, ask for some time (e.g., 4 or 5 days) to work more slowly so you can adjust to being back at work
- Take regular breaks:
 - ask your supervisor or manager about regularly scheduled breaks – a 5-minute break every hour is better than a 15-minute break every 3 hours
 - during your break, walk around or do some stretches or other light exercises
- When you have no customers during your shift, sit at your workstation
- Ask your supervisor or manager about task rotation, in order to take a break from scanning

Hazard: Working in the Cold

Details

Cold drafts come from an open door or air conditioning vents.

Threat

- Tight muscles, increasing the risk of muscle and joint disorders
- Difficulty concentrating, possibly leading to injuries

Safe Work Guidelines

- If possible, change workstations to get away from the cold drafts
- Ask to have a deflector installed on the air conditioning vent to direct the cold air away from your station
- If possible, wear a sweater

Hazard: Poor Viewing Conditions

Details

You may have difficulty seeing what you are working on when there is glare from overhead lights or sunlight, the cash register display is difficult to read (e.g., too faint or too small) or price tickets and receipts are difficult to read.

Threat

- Eyestrain
- Headaches
- Difficulty concentrating

Safe Work Guidelines

- Ask your supervisor or manager about doing something to cut down on the glare from sunlight and the overhead lights
- If possible, angle your equipment to avoid the glare

- Make sure that the cash register has enough ink to print receipts clearly
- Have your eyes checked regularly
- If you wear bifocals, ask your doctor about a prescription to make it easier for you to read the cash register display

Hazard: Excessive Noise

Details

Noise can come from store activities, poorly maintained equipment or the paging system.

Threat

- Distraction
- Stress
- Headache
- Difficulty concentrating

Safe Work Guidelines

- Tag squeaky carts and tell your manager about them
- Report noisy conveyor belts
- Ask the manager to turn down the level on the sound system

Additional Resources

- Reuseable Bag Guidelines, Workplace Safety and Prevention Services (WSPS)

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