



Please find below safety guidelines and measures that can be taken to minimize the risk of injury and accidents during office moves. If you have any questions or require further information, please contact a member of the Health and Safety team by email at safety@uwindsor.ca or by phone at extension 4521.

Potential Hazards in Office Moves

Accidents or injuries can occur during office moves, despite everyone's best efforts. Potential hazards associated with packing and moving include:

- Strains/sprains caused by the lifting / carrying of heavy items;
- Other ergonomic hazards from material handling, including awkward postures, over-reaching, deep bending and twisting;
- Cuts from the use of box cutters, scissors, or sharp edges;
- Contusions from being struck by / against objects, moving of furniture, material handling, etc.;
- Trips and falls caused by clutter/items stored within workspaces.

Preparation

In preparation for your office move:

- Work with the departmental contact regarding the details and logistics of the move, including the delivery of moving crates/boxes, packing supplies, etc.
- Ensure you have adequate supplies, appropriate tools, and equipment if needed (carts, dollies, etc.)
- Make sure you give yourself enough time to pack properly and safely.
- Wipe down the surface of items with a wet cloth prior to packing them, to minimize dust when unpacking later.

Packing

Prior to packing, consider the safety guidelines below:

- When packing crates and boxes, pack heavy and sturdy items in the bottom of the box, with lighter items on top.
- Alternate your tasks to eliminate muscle fatigue. Take micro-breaks as needed.
- Do not overpack the crate/box. Ensure the box can withstand the weight of its contents. Cardboard boxes should be reinforced as necessary, across the seams.
- Avoid over-reaching, deep bending, and twisting when you lift or handle items.
- Do not pack any liquids into cardboard boxes.
- Be aware of sharp edges (boxes, filing cabinets, etc.). Wear gloves to handle these items, if required.
- Use caution when using sharp tools such as box cutters or scissors.
- The top of packed boxes must lay flat so they can be stacked.
- Do not stand on chairs! A proper stepladder must be used, if needed.
- Place heavier boxes on the bottom of a stack. Never stack more than three boxes high. Ensure stacks are secure.
- DO NOT LIFT any heavy loaded boxes/crates without assistance.
- Do not move any furniture, or assemble/disassemble furniture, without assistance.
- The workspace should be kept orderly and the aiseways clear, to prevent trip hazards. Floors should remain clean and free from debris and clutter.

Fire Safety Considerations

It is important that fire safety guidelines are maintained during the moving process:

- When stacking boxes or storing items / furniture, ensure aiseways are kept clear to maintain a path to emergency egress routes (minimum of 3.5').
- Flammables/combustibles are to be kept away from exits.
- Items are not to be stored in front of doors, exits, or electrical panels (3').
- Fire exit doors, signs, exit routes, and fire extinguishers are clearly visible and free of obstructions.

Safe Lifting Technique

- Size up the load and check its overall conditions (shape, weight, size). Test the weight of a load prior to lifting. Look for sharp edges, nails, splinters, etc. when handling materials, and wear gloves if required. Do not attempt to lift alone if the item appears too heavy or awkward.
- Check to ensure there is adequate space for movement, and good footing;
- Secure the load. Ensure you will have adequate vision while moving the load.
- Always lift within your own lifting capacity. If in doubt, implement a team lift or use a mechanical lifting device (cart, dollies, etc.).
- When conducting a team lift, communication is key to avoid accidental injury!
- Bend at the knees and grasp the load as closely to your chest as possible, keeping your back straight;
- Lift by using your legs, not your back;
- Keep your arms and elbows close to the body when lifting. Be sure you can always see where you are going;
- Do not twist your body. To change direction, shift your foot position and then turn the whole body;
- To deposit a load on a bench, shelf, or table, place it on the edge and then push it into position;
- Always put down a load using the same technique as you used to lift it (hold close to your chest, bend at the knees).

Unpacking / Moving In

- Make arrangements for furniture movement/assembly as necessary. Do not attempt this on your own.
- Ensure you have the proper equipment to reduce the amount of lifting and carrying. Use mechanical aids (carts, dollies, etc.) where possible. Be aware of sharp edges and objects.
- Always unpack the top box of a stack first, working your way down, to avoid injury.
- Avoid lifting a full box from the top of the stack. Unpack the box first, if possible, or ask for assistance to lower it.
- Be aware of sharp edges and objects.
- Alternate tasks and take micro-breaks as necessary.
- Ask for assistance to move any heavy or awkward-shaped items.
- When setting up your new workstation, adjust your monitor screen, keyboard, mouse and chair properly. Reference Health and Safety's "Office Workstation Self-Assessment Checklist" at www.uwindsor.ca/safety

In Case of Injury – Accident Reporting

In the event of an injury, accident, or incident:

- Obtain first aid assistance, or seek medical attention as required;
- Report the incident to your Supervisor;
- Together with your Supervisor, complete the Accident/Incident report (www.uwindsor.ca/safety); and
- Follow-up with the Health and Safety office as required, regarding incident investigation and medical documentation, if applicable.

For more information, visit the Health and Safety website at www.uwindsor.ca/safety