



ZURICH®

# Retail safety solutions

# Display Safety and Housekeeping

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## DISPLAY SAFETY AND HOUSEKEEPING

To provide a broad view of display safety we need to define two basic legal terms and how they affect daily operations within your company.

**Invitee** is a person who comes onto another property, premises or business establishment by invitation. The invitation may be direct, expressed or implied. Implied as in when a store is open and the public is expected to inspect, purchase or otherwise do business on the premises. (2)

**Reasonable care** is applied when retailers have a duty to invitees to exercise reasonable care to keep their premises in a reasonably safe condition and to warn of unsafe or hazardous conditions of which the retailer knows or should know through reasonable care and inspection. (2)

### Common display types

Displays and fixtures can vary widely. A few of the more common types include gondolas, free standing clothes racks, display tables, jewelry counters, slat walls, sunglass racks, free-standing kiosks, shelving units, and display cases. These displays/fixtures also range in construction materials. Many cases are built of wood, glass, plastic, wire, metal and cardboard. Many displays are designed for specific products and can be designated for temporary use.

### Common causes of display accidents

Common causes of accidents involving customer and associate injuries and displays include the instability or poor balance of the fixture after assembly, poor weight distribution and/or overloaded weight capacity of the fixture after assembly, improper assembly of the fixture based on manufacturer instructions, empty end caps,

poor or no visibility of the base of the fixture, sharp ended display hooks, improper or overloading of merchandise onto the fixture, and damaged components of a fixture.

### Display safety controls

Controls should include associate procedures and training on the proper assembly and loading of displays and fixtures, safety inspections to include documented repairs, and proper signing of displays such as "Please Ask for Assistance!"

Associate procedures and training should include the following topics:

- Requirement to follow display and fixture manufacturer assembly instructions at all times. Keep assembly instructions on file for the lifetime of the fixture.
- Know the manufacturer's maximum weight capacity of the display or fixture. This will prevent overloading and possible collapse of the display/fixture.
- Review how merchandise is loaded or presented on the display/fixture by weight, size and construction (i. e. fragile glass, china, awkward shaped merchandise, etc).
- Heavy or awkward merchandise close to the bottom of the display.
- Do not overcrowd the display and fixture.
- How to inspect the display or fixture for stability, damage and structural integrity.

Procedures and training are methods to identify potential hazards, fix or repair the display/fixtures, and provide a consistent, properly assembled and attractive display for customers.

**Merchandise should be in good condition and fit adequately on the shelf. Overcrowding of merchandise on a shelf or display base can contribute to more falling merchandise and increased injuries and damages.**



A common cause for injuries involving displays is overloading the display with merchandise (i. e. too much weight on top or one side results in the fixture tipping or falling over). Depending on the construction of the display, and the weight and height of the merchandise, the newly created center of gravity can make the display top heavy and cause it to shift or many times tip over.

Tall, heavy or awkward merchandise should be displayed on lower shelves. This allows customers to examine and pickup merchandise without having to reach or stretch which could cause the merchandise to fall and cause injuries to other customers and damage to merchandise.

Merchandise should be in good condition and fit adequately on the shelf. Overcrowding of merchandise on a shelf or display base can contribute to more falling merchandise and increased injuries and damages. Broken or damaged merchandise should be removed immediately, marked out of stock and disposed of properly.

A “bump” test can provide a basic test as to the stability of the merchandise on the fixture. A slight nudge of a shelf or display base will quickly indicate if the merchandise and/or the display or fixture is stable. The “bump test” should be used after loading merchandise on the fixture and completed preferably when the store is closed.

A “bump” test simulates what would happen if a customer or Associate were to accidentally hit or fall toward the display. If after the bump test any shifting of merchandise on the display or fixture occurs, re-adjust merchandise, check for display or fixture damage and re-conduct the bump test. Displays that prove to be unsafe should be redesigned and reconstructed as necessary.

### **Trip and fall characteristics**

Empty end caps are a common cause of serious trip and fall incidents in the retail industry. Many times the white or cream colored end cap shelf blends in with the flooring. As a result, the customer may not see the exposure when turning the corner.

In order to help prevent these serious injuries, end cap shelves should be maintained full or the empty shelf removed.

### **Signage**

Signage such as “Please Ask for Assistance!” should be posted on display/fixtures, especially when heavy or awkward merchandise is located overhead. Giving customers notice may aid in preventing a customer injury. It may also be a mitigating factor in the event of a customer injury.

“Please do not climb shelving!” is appropriate signing in stockrooms and warehouses to establish the fact that associates should not be climbing them.

Warehouse fixtures used in stockrooms are never to be used as climbing devices per the manufacturer. Associates should be trained to use ladders in lieu of taking this common short cut to retrieve stock.

### **Display hooks (1)**

Unguarded display hooks, hooks consisting of a single wire (1/8 to 1/4 inch diameter) with a blunt-cut end can present a substantial injury hazard to customers, especially children.

Improvements to blunt-end hooks include a rounded end, with hooks where the ends are formed into “J”, “U” or loop shapes. These shapes act as a guard to prevent injury. In addition, some hooks include a barrier guard, which serves as a label or price holder.

The National Safety Council continues to focus attention on unprotected display hooks.

Display and fixture safety are critical components of successful retailing. Providing the appropriate level of training and maintaining the best practices suggested will go far in assisting your company in preventing related injuries.

### **Housekeeping**

Good housekeeping can have a positive effect on safety, productivity, and associate morale.

From a customer perspective, good housekeeping standards “speak louder than words.” Many customers will judge if they will enter or return to a store based on the visual appearance of an operation.

A well maintained sales floor and backroom can provide good display and storage organization for customers and associates. Sound standards will also reduce the chances of injury.

Housekeeping is critically important to the success of a retail store .



## Housekeeping standards should include

### Sales floor

- Associates should perform regular safety sweeps of designated sales floor areas looking for and recovering debris, hangers, sizing hubs and merchandise that should not be on the floor.
- If appropriate, place trash receptacles at entrances and throughout the sales floor for customer use
- Make available spill or debris clean up materials such as a broom, dustpan, paper towels, mop, bucket, and warning signs, located in a "designated area."
- If utilized, clean or dry and inspect shopping carts on a regular basis.
- Maintain interior and exterior lighting and keep front windows clean for good visibility.
- Maintain good housekeeping in restrooms, break rooms, fitting rooms, etc.
- Watch for water or liquids coming from leaking pipes, air conditioning drains, soda dispensers, water coolers, refrigeration units, etc.
- Floor scrubbers or floor cleaning tasks should be done after or before store operating hours
- Place quality entrance mats that provide 15 to 20 feet of coverage at door thresholds.
- Mark full panels of glass doors with approved company decals to help prevent customers from walking into a glass door and being injured.

### Backrooms and storage areas

- Backrooms should be well organized with properly stored equipment.
- Walkways to fire exits and merchandise storage areas should be outlined with yellow lines. This will provide visual direction to associates where different types of merchandise should be stored.
- Keep stairways and walkways clear and free of debris. Remember, there should "never" be any storage on steps or stairs as this practice could result in a serious fall.
- Ensure emergency stairwells are properly illuminated. This area is often forgotten.
- Ensure emergency exit signs and back up emergency lighting are functional 24/7.
- Keep handrails and mid-rails free of grease, dirt and oil. Ensure the handrails are graspable. (1.25 to 2.00 inches in diameter.) "Please use handrail" signs in place.
- Keep the area around the compactor and/or baler free of trash and debris inside and outside of the building.
- Keep aerosols or other flammable or combustible materials in approved cabinets.
- Remove any cords, cables, etc. that create a trip hazard.

Housekeeping is critically important to the success of a retail store because it involves protecting the two biggest assets in the store: **Customers and Associates.**

## Display safety and housekeeping checklist

### Display / Fixture condition

- Do all fixtures / displays have written assembly instructions on file?
- Have associates receive training on proper assembly of displays and fixtures?
- What is the weight capacity of each display and fixture?
- Have associates been trained on how to properly inspect fixtures for stability and damage?
- Does the company self-inspection program include displays and fixture safety?

### Merchandise displays

- Have associates received training on loading merchandise onto displays and fixtures?
- Is heavier merchandise positioned on LOWER shelves?
- Are displays overloaded or overcrowded?
- Is there informational signage on overhead displays? (Ex. "Please ask for assistance")
- Is lighting adequate?
- Are merchandise cords secured to prevent tripping incidents?



## Display safety and housekeeping checklist – *Continued*

### Display Hooks

- Are peg hooks formed in a “J”, “U”, or looped shapes?
- Does a label holder prevent contact with the wire end?
- Are damaged hooks disposed of properly?

### Housekeeping

- Is the area around displays and fixtures clutter free and cleaned regularly?
- Are warning signs placed to alert of a hazard that cannot be removed immediately?
- Are stairways and walkways clear and free of storage?

#### References

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