

## Ergonomics Case Study Cleaning Stations for New Facility

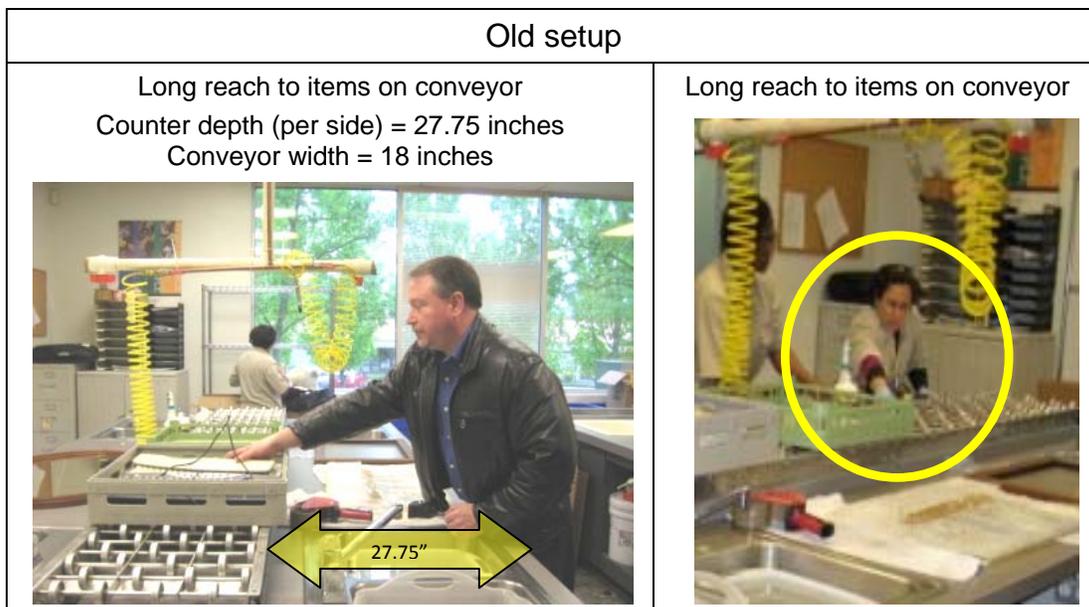
### Background

ServiceMaster of Seattle is a disaster restoration service company.

ServiceMaster's building lease for their Kirkland cleaning and storage facility was ending soon. CEO Michael S. Mack realized the benefit to getting ergonomics design help prior to moving into their new facility in July of 2008. He asked an L&I Ergonomist to visit the Kirkland facility and provide input on the design for the new cleaning stations. He wanted to make sure the appropriate sinks were ordered before the move.

### Issues Found

The sink height and counter height didn't prove to be very much of a problem. Instead, the main problem was the reach distance across the counter to retrieve items from the conveyor. Workers have to reach far, and they sometimes have to bend from the waist to reach items. These motions are awkward, and even more so for short workers.

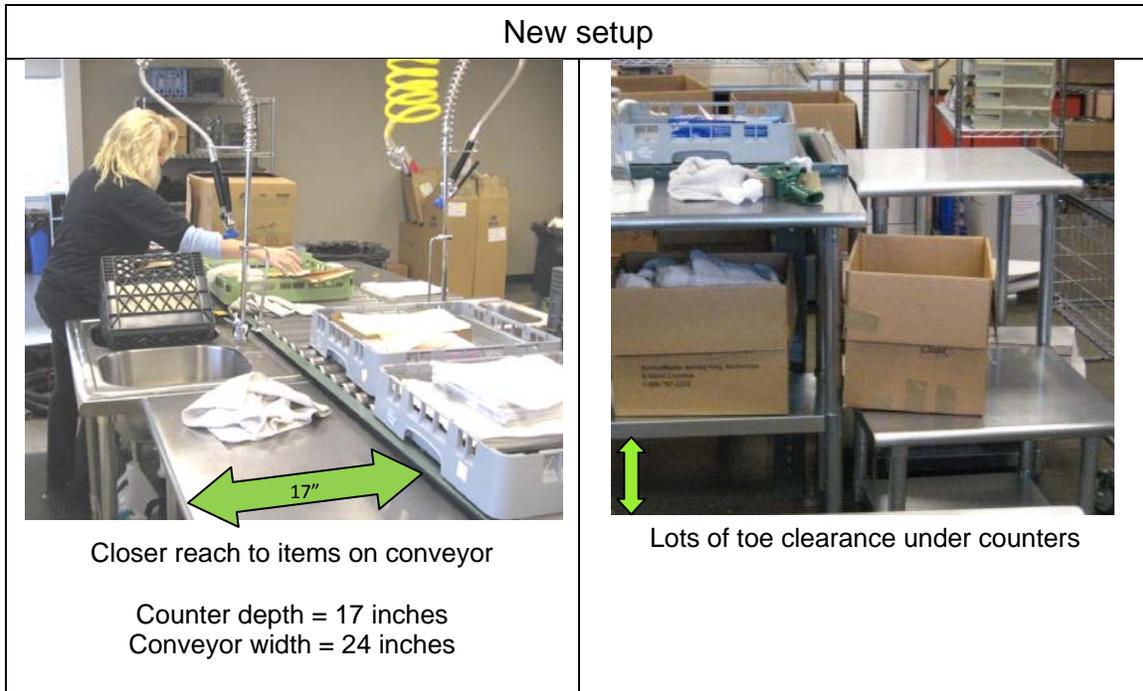


### Recommendations

The ergonomist offered several ideas for ServiceMaster to consider. All of the solution options included a shorter counter depth and were geared towards improving the process flow. She also advised them to ensure good toe clearance. This also works to keep the reach distance to a minimum.

## Implementation

ServiceMaster management involved employees in the change making process. After discussions with the staff, they decided against using “L” shaped cleaning stations and decided to keep the in-line arrangement of the cleaning stations on both sides of the conveyor. They shortened the width of the counter and widened the conveyor. Workers from both sides of the conveyor can more easily reach items, even from the middle of the conveyor.



## Follow-up

Workers are quite happy with the new design. Now, workers don't have to reach as far. They reduced their risk for injuries and have increased their productivity.

As of November 2008, productivity for this work area has improved by 8 percent. Management credits the improved workstation design for the improved productivity. Mack believes that productivity will eventually improve to 10%. They also saved about 2% in building costs for the new cleaning stations compared to their original budget.

Mack offered that involving L&I's ergonomist has had a positive effect on morale. "Our employees really felt we had their best interests in mind."

## ServiceMaster's home-grown ergonomics ideas that make their work easier

- ServiceMaster bought easy to move tables for staging and sliding items. These also allow for a flexible layout.



- ServiceMaster bought more rolling racks. Rolling racks reduce carrying and may help reduce re-handling of items.



- ServiceMaster made their own rolling rack, improving the transport of packaging materials to their point of use within the plant. Now workers don't manually lift and carry rolls of packing material in the building. It's much faster and easier to push the rack.

