

A Push for Safety



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A retail parking lot with shopping carts tucked away neatly in cart corals might seem like no big deal. But each day, retail workers battle these wheeled herds with a forceful combination of awkward body movements. Manual cart retrieval requires a serious dose of pushing, pulling, and twisting. Many LP and safety leaders might dismiss shopping cart retrieval as routine, but it's the cause of some of the most common, and dangerous, injuries in retail.

Consider these statistics

Musculoskeletal disorders, such as back and shoulder injuries, account for nearly 43% of all lost-time injuries in the workplace (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2019). One in three workplace injuries are caused by overexertion (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2020). And, over half a million injury cases flood reporting systems each year (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2020). Every sore back stretch, every shoulder strain is a story of a person who, like everyone, is just trying to get the job done. Yet these injuries don't announce themselves, they creep in with little notice. Some stiffness here. A twinge there. Before you know it, they've turned from discomfort to full-blown incapacitation.

Retail strain injuries typically don't just appear out of nowhere. They build up over time. Each pull, twist, and bend quietly chips away at our connective tissue. What starts as mild discomfort can morph into chronic conditions that disrupt productivity and cost retail businesses far more than they realize. And so, the question is... at what point does tradition give way to innovation?

Mother Nature

The weather is not your friend when it comes to cart retrieval. Imagine a blazing July afternoon, with heat radiating off the asphalt, with overflowing cart corals and shopping carts abandoned in the far reaches of the parking lot. Heat stress is uncomfortable and dangerous. When dehydration sets in, judgment falters and accidents follow.

55% of all workplace pedestrian injuries take place in parking lots (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2020). Winter, however, brings its own set of hazards. Frozen parking lots become skating rinks. Carts, once obedient, now misbehave in the hands of workers fighting snow, ice, and rain – turning parking surfaces into slick, unpredictable terrain where control becomes a guessing game.

All year long, employees are subjected to harsh weather, amplifying every risk, whether it's the scorching summer heat or the biting cold of winter. Parking lots just put employees at a heightened risk of getting injured. But what's often forgotten is how much stress these environmental challenges add to an already overburdened body. How much longer should employees be expected to carry this weight when technology can simplify the task?

Calculating the True Cost

Let's break down the costs of manual cart retrieval. Workers' comp claims are just the tip of the iceberg. The medical bills pile up. Productivity decreases as injured employees miss shifts. Temporary replacements come in, but they require training and time to integrate, which further disrupts the store operation.

But let's be clear... the numbers tell only part of the story. Lower morale, damaged reputation, and customer experience are harder to quantify, but they hit profits just as hard.

Runaway carts scratching up customer vehicles are more than just a minor inconvenience.

These incidents may seem insignificant but have a knack for escalating into bigger problems.

The shopping cart, often the most neglected piece of store equipment, is also the longest point of contact between a customer and a store's brand. And just when you think it's under control, those stray carts always seem to have a special talent for finding a Mercedes Benz.

But the issues go beyond just property damage. Manual cart retrieval is not only physically demanding, it's a huge time commitment. During busy times, carts left scattered across the parking lot often mean there are no carts available inside for customers. The result?

Disappointed customers and missed sales. When someone walks into your store looking for a cart and can't find one, it's a missed opportunity to make a sale and deliver a positive customer experience.

Over time, these little mishaps, from damaged cars to customer frustration, can cause major damage to your brand's reputation and bottom line.

Technology Meets Practicality

Necessity breeds innovation. Enter the [CartManager® Ultra](#), also known as the cart mule, cart pusher, or tugger. This automated solution transforms cart retrieval from a physically taxing job into a streamlined, efficient process.

Picture this: instead of multiple employees wrestling with uncooperative shopping carts, one employee can now control up to 25 carts. The strain? Gone. Efficiency? Skyrocketing. The weather won't matter anymore. Let the machine take the physical burden, and your team can focus on what really matters – customer service.

The [CartManager® Ultra](#) makes cart retrieval easier while reducing environmental hazards, minimizing repetitive motion injuries, and significantly lowering the risk of accidents. When employees are relieved from physical stress, they can focus on value-adding activities that benefit the store as a whole.

ROI That Makes Sense

Safety, by far, is the number one benefit of CartManager® Ultra, but the financial perks of automation are hard to ignore. By reducing the time spent on cart retrieval tasks by almost two-thirds, it immediately cuts down on injuries, lowering workers' compensation costs in the process (Gatekeeper Systems, n.d.). Fewer injuries mean fewer claims, and lower premiums. It's a win-win.

The long-term returns from this technology aren't just a nice-to-have; they're undeniable. Healthier employees miss fewer days and require less medical intervention. With organized parking lots, you'll see fewer accidents and smoother customer experiences. As physical burdens lighten for your employees, their engagement, loyalty, and overall happiness increase. This is an investment in your team and ensuring long-term operational success.

Real Results: From Theory to Practice

Here's the thing: most retailers already using the CartManager® Ultra aren't just seeing the numbers improve – they're seeing morale improve. Employees, no longer bogged down by the physical strain of cart retrieval, are more engaged and focused on customer service. Injury rates drop. Service quality improves. And, as a result, customer satisfaction rises.

This isn't just theory. It's real-world transformation, and it's happening now.

Make a Push for Safety

Is the CartManager® Ultra the ultimate solution for every retail challenge? Probably not. But for those organizations genuinely concerned about employee safety, smoother operations, and sustainable growth, this is a giant step forward. Sometimes progress is about solving an existing problem in a smarter, more efficient way.

Are you ready to make a push for safety? The CartManager® Ultra awaits the forward-thinkers who are ready to rethink what's possible. Your employees, and your bottom line, will thank you.

References

- Gatekeeper Systems. (n.d.). CartManager® Ultra product specifications and case studies. Gatekeeper Systems.
- U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2019). Nonfatal Occupational Injuries and Illnesses Requiring Days Away from Work. Retrieved from Make a Push for Safety from <https://www.bls.gov>
- U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2020). Workplace Injuries and Illnesses. Retrieved from <https://www.bls.gov>

About Gatekeeper

Gatekeeper Systems' expanded product suite of intelligent cart solutions offers solutions for EVERY retailer's needs to minimize merchandise loss, reduce asset and labor expenditures. Gatekeeper's loss prevention and cart containment solutions utilize patented locking technology to put an end to cart-based shoplifting, shopping cart loss, and uninformed decision-making. Cart management solutions increase safety and reduce labor costs by maximizing productivity while simultaneously resulting in a positive store image. Intelligent pushout theft prevention solutions stop thieves and their cart full of unpaid merchandise from leaving the store. Customizable technology allows retailers to defend their entire store or just a high loss department based on the store's unique layout. Business Intelligence solutions provide increased visibility for informed decision making. Increase efficiency, optimize fleet size, and perfect the entire customer shopping experience with store and enterprise-level analytics.

