CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A method for delivering items from a storage system to a pick station, comprising the steps of:

   driving a vehicle having a container to a pick station;

   driving the vehicle upwardly at the pick station to an upper position to displace the container at an elevated position to present the container to the operator;

   releasably retaining the container in the elevated position;

   driving the vehicle downwardly away from the upper position while the container is retained in the elevated position, whereby driving the vehicle downwardly while the container is retained in the elevated position operates to detach the vehicle from the container;

   driving one or more subsequent vehicles to the pick station to deliver items to be placed in the container while the container is retained in the elevated position.

2. The method of claim 1 comprising the steps of:

   driving a retrieval vehicle upwardly at the pick station to the upper position into operative engagement with the container while the container is retained in the elevated position; and

   releasing the container.

3. The method of claim 3 comprising the step of driving the retrieval vehicle downwardly with the released container.

4. The method of claim 3 comprising the step of driving the retrieval vehicle horizontally away from the pick station after the step of driving the vehicle downwardly.

5. A material handling system workstation operable in connection with a first delivery vehicle operable to convey a first container and a second delivery vehicle operable to convey the first container, wherein the first delivery vehicle and the second delivery vehicle each comprise a vertical drive element, and wherein the workstation comprises:

a frame;

a track connected with the frame, wherein the track is configured to cooperate with the vertical drive element of the first and second vehicles to facilitate vertical displacement of the first and second vehicles to a raised position so that items may be transferred into or retrieved from the first container;

a retainer operable between a first and second position wherein in the first position the retainer retains the first container in an upper position when the first vehicle is lowered from the raised position and wherein in the second position the retainer releases the first container from the upper position;

a controller configured to selectively actuate the retainer from the second position to the first position after the first vehicle is displaced into the raised position; wherein the controller is configured to selectively actuate the retainer from the first position to the second position after a second vehicle is displaced into the raised position so that the container is released onto the second vehicle to allow the second vehicle to transfer the container away from the workstation.

6. The workstation of claim 5 comprising a second track adjacent the track wherein the second track is configured to cooperate with the vertical drive element of the first and second vehicles to facilitate vertical displacement of the first and second vehicles to the raised position so that items may be transferred into or retrieved from a second container carried by the first or second vehicle.

7. The workstation of claim 5 wherein the retainer comprises a pivotable arm.

8. The workstation of claim 5 wherein the frame is configured to facilitate the first and second vehicles driving into engagement with the track while transporting the first container.

9. The workstation of claim 8 wherein the frame is configured to facilitate the first and second vehicle driving into engagement with the second track while transporting the second container.

10. The workstation of claim 8 or 9 comprising a housing having a first opening configured to cooperate with the first container, wherein the housing has second opening configured to allow passage of the first or second vehicles while carrying the first container.