

LOSS CONTROL TOOL CHEST

Ergonomics and Your Company

One of the biggest challenges employers and safety specialists' face is developing and delivering training that is ongoing and effective. This is often the case when dealing with Ergonomics.

Ergonomic training can be a greater challenge based on the fact that it is difficult to understand how to balance an individual's capabilities with the demands of the job when individuals are so different physically.

Ergonomics is "The science that deals with the comfort of the human being by adjusting workstations, tools, product and workstations design to help create ease and an injury-free work environment".

A major misconception is that ergonomic issues are only related to employees who work at computers throughout the day. Ergonomics is a concern whether you spend your day at a work station, work at an assembling line or lift and carry materials.

Take your loss history for instance; past employee injuries can tell you a great deal about potential ergonomic exposures that may exist in your operation. If you are seeing repetitive strains and sprains (soft tissue injuries) or repetitive injuries to wrists and shoulders you most likely have ergonomic related exposures that need to be addressed. Training and awareness are always important but to control the exposure you must find out why your employees are continuing to get injured. You may find that your employees are being exposed to one or more of the following Risk Factors:

Ergonomic Risk Factors

- Posture
- Force / Weight
- Duration
- Frequency
- Mechanical Stress
- Vibration
- Cold

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How can you reduce these risk factors?

The key is to evaluate exposures specific to your industry and then develop a plan to help your employees interact with those ergonomic exposures. Making the work area adjustable and reducing repetitive steps/actions is the key to reducing your ergonomic exposures.

Cal/OSHA Publications:

Cal/OSHA has a number of ergonomic publications for construction and general industry at the following web-address:

<http://www.dir.ca.gov/dosh/PubOrder.asp>

Ergonomics – History of the California Standard

<http://www.dir.ca.gov/DOSH/ergohist.htm>