



5-minute safety talk

Ergonomics

Ergonomics involves designing and arranging workspaces so people work efficiently and safely. Ergonomics is used to evaluate how you do your work to identify any risk factors that might lead to injury, and then to find the best solution to eliminate or manage the hazard. Your capabilities and limitations are taken into account to ensure tasks, equipment, information and your environment suit you.

What are ergonomic conditions?

Ergonomic conditions are disorders of the soft tissues, specifically of the muscles, nerves, tendons, ligaments, joints, cartilage, blood vessels, and spinal discs. If you experience pain or injury in your soft tissues, it might be caused by factors such as repetition, force, awkward postures, contact stress, or vibration and may develop over time. These types of injuries and pains are not caused by slips, trips, falls or motor vehicle collisions.

Recognizing ergonomic symptoms

Common ergonomic symptoms include pain, swelling, tingling, tenderness or numbness in soft tissue areas. Sometimes difficulty moving or using the extremity is a symptom. These symptoms may indicate trauma or disorder related to ergonomic conditions. If you are experiencing any of these symptoms, make sure to see your physician or an occupational physician as soon as possible to determine the cause of your pain.

Ergonomic risk factors

The main categories of ergonomic risk factors are:

- Environment – risks found in your work environment
- Equipment – risks associated with the equipment you use
- Work practices – risks caused by work requirements, processes or procedures
- Individual – risks that are unique to you as an individual, such as physical characteristics, habits and behavior

Repetitive movements that may be non-strenuous or strenuous can cause ergonomic conditions. Some conditions can be brought on by:

- Sudden increases in your workload
- Introduction of a new process to your work routine
- Use of vibrating tools
- Maintaining a rigid posture

Common ergonomic problems

You probably have heard of many of these common ergonomic problems: bursitis, carpal tunnel syndrome, osteoarthritis, tendonitis, tension neck or shoulder and trigger finger.

If you have been diagnosed with one of these conditions and your work tasks, equipment, or environment have not changed, be sure to talk with your supervisor or safety personnel to find ways to adjust your work patterns to ones that will not stress your soft tissues.

Ergonomic solutions

To help minimize and possibly eliminate ergonomic risk factors there are some steps you can take. Be sure to talk with your supervisor about what to do if you are experiencing pain in the soft tissues. Talk with ergonomic experts to identify what is causing the pain and to find a solution to eliminate or reduce the risk.

Reducing the pace of work, alternating repetitive tasks with non-repetitive tasks at regular intervals, or increasing the number of breaks from repetitive work can also reduce or eliminate ergonomic risk factors you are subjected to on the job. Taking appropriate steps means you will experience fewer injuries and fewer lost work days.

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