Sample Policy Requirements For Ergonomics/Musculoskeletal Disorders Prevention

Introduction

This document aims to facilitate the creation of an ergonomics/musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) prevention policy for your organization. An organization's ergonomics/MSDs prevention policy describes the systems, processes, tools, roles and responsibilities an organization uses to guide its ergonomics program. It is specific to an organization and is essentially an ergonomics roadmap for the organization. An ergonomics program is a part of creating a healthy workforce and a productive workplace. The ergonomics policy will facilitate the consistent application of all ergonomics systems, ensure the organization complies with applicable ergonomics laws and regulations, and may even assist with recruiting and retaining top talent as it demonstrates a value for the workers and their safety and wellbeing.

Policy Requirements

Specific to ergonomics and MSD prevention, the following essential sections are suggested as part of developing an organization's ergonomics policy. These suggestions can be for either in-person or remote work environments.

Purpose:

Every organization, small, medium or large, must establish a clear set of policies and procedures to help guide its operations or processes. This section should include what workers can expect from the organization and what the organization expects from them. For example, does an organization support injury prevention measures for its employees (e.g., improvements to work processes, workstations and equipment)? Does it provide ergonomics resources, education, training and consultation? Does the 'Purpose' explicitly mention that employees take responsibility for their health and safety by adhering to the outlined policy and procedures?

Scope:

The scope statement should include information on a new or revised facility or company policy. In addition, it should provide a summary of the proposed approach, including information regarding safeguarding those affected by the developed document. For example, does this scope apply to only one or multiple sites? Does it cover the state government's regulatory requirements where the site(s) are located?

The Policy Statement can be a standalone section in specific situations and is placed immediately after 'Purpose'. This **section** states the requirement or provision a specific policy sets on or extends to, including who should follow it and when it should be applied, but this section does not describe 'how to' procedures. Different statements, if any, within the main Policy Statement can also be separately numbered for further clarity and distinction.

Definitions:

The terms used in the policy and procedures are typically defined in alphabetical order as they serve as a glossary for the policy. These definitions assist the policy users in understanding terminology, especially those needing more interpretation related to certain specifics (e.g., technical or terms with special meanings) of the policy and procedures.

It should be noted some policy documents have this section after the scope, while some include it at the end of the policy document.

Responsibility:

This section should describe the duties of each individual for the tasks listed, ensuring they follow them. These responsibilities may list specific positions within the organization and how those positions contribute to completing a policy or procedure, such as who is in charge of ergonomics evaluations, employee training, implementation of ergonomics improvements, and recordkeeping, and who contributes to a safe and healthy work environment. This section should also include the expectations for workers in ergonomics initiatives, including identifying jobs with MSD risk, sharing ideas for solutions, and using implemented solutions.

Procedures:

This section should include a detailed description of how the different elements of your ergonomics initiatives are accomplished. As evidenced from the NSC infographic '**Building an MSD Solutions Program**,' have procedures in place for identifying and addressing existing MSD hazards and risks, as well as for preventing the introduction of new hazards and risks. It should be organized by the tasks to accomplish chronologically. For example, what does your ergonomics program consist of? What types of ergonomic assessments are performed – a self-assessment, preventive or workers' compensation assessment? What risk assessment tools are used, and for what tasks?

References:

Any related policies, standards, laws and regulations, procedures, guidelines and other resources supporting part of developing the policy should be provided here.

History:

This section should include the initial release of the policy and contact information, such as the policy owner (typically the department or the position and not an individual's name), for further clarification. If there are changes to the policy and procedures, the date of the revision, updated information and the responsible department should also be provided.

Other essential elements of the ergonomics policy could include information on the annual program review, **such as the risk assessments, engineering and administrative controls implemented**, and the **type and frequency of education and training** imparted to the staff. These details can be part of recordkeeping, tracking and retention, and are also important in the ergonomic policy. Last but not least, the name of the individual and the department that approved the development of the policy should be part of the ergonomics policy as well.

In summary, the policy developed should be clear, concise and easy to understand by various stakeholders. It is also advisable to have workers and other stakeholder representatives present during the policy development process. Finally, the policy should reflect the organization's vision, values and culture, such that the document can empower workers.

References

Ergonomics Process, Washington State Department of Labor and Industries
https://lni.wa.gov/safety-health/preventing-injuries-illnesses/sprains-strains/ergonomics-process

Fresno County, California – Ergonomics Program Template
https://www.co.fresno.ca.us

Giving Your Business the Human Factors (Ergonomics) Edge
https://ergonomics.org.uk/resource/giving-your-business-the-human-factors-edge.html

Healthy and Safe Telework: Technical Brief
https://www.who.int/news/item/02-02-2022-crucial-changes-needed-to-protect-workers-health-while-teleworking

ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work
https://www.ilo.org/declaration/lang--en/index.htm

NIOSH Elements of Ergonomics Program,
https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/ergonomics/ergoprimer/default.html

OSH Act of 1970
https://www.osha.gov/laws-regs/oshact/section5-duties

Principles and Guidelines for Human factors /Ergonomics (HFE) Design and Management of Work Systems
https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/safety-and-health-at-work/news/WCMS_826596/lang--en/index.htm

Schneider Electric – Ergonomics Program
https://www.se.com/us/en/

Society for Human Resource Management
https://www.shrm.org/search/pages/default.aspx#topic=Policies+and+Practices

State Compensation Insurance Fund, California – Sample Ergonomics Policy
https://content.statefundca.com//safety/SampleErgoPlan.asp

The US Telework Act
https://www.telework.gov/guidance-legislation/telework-legislation/telework-enhancement-act/

University of Norte Dame Policy Repository
https://policy.nd.edu/

VelocityEHS – Ergonomics Policy Template
https://www.ehs.com/about-us/

VelocityEHS – Ergonomics Process Guidance Template – Manufacturing
https://www.ehs.com/about-us/

WHO healthy workplace framework and model
https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/who-healthy-workplace-framework-and-model

Subject:	Policy Number:	
Department:	☐ New ☐ Revised ☐ Reviewed	Date:
	Policy Owner:	
Approved By:	Implementation Date:	

Purpose:

Scope:

Definitions:

Responsible Staff:

Procedures:

References:

History:

Approved By: