ICRMA

Safety Bulletin
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Ergonomics and Soft Tissue Injury Prevention

California Code of Regulation Title 8, Section 5110 requires employers to have a Repetitive Motion Program. Repetitive motion injuries (RMIs) are predominantly caused (i.e., 50% or more) by a repetitive job, process, or operation. To help employers, Cal OSHA has published a guidance document to assist employers.

What is an Ergonomic Injury? An ergonomic injury is one which results from prolonged strain, pressure, or incorrect posture due to a specific ergonomic hazard. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, 34% of all lost-workday injuries and illnesses are work-related musculoskeletal disorders (WMSD).

Prevention of Musculoskeletal Disorders in the Workplace Musculoskeletal Disorders (**MSD**s) affect the muscles, nerves, blood vessels, ligaments, and tendons. Workers in many different industries and occupations can be exposed to risk factors at work, such as lifting heavy items, bending, reaching overhead, pushing, and pulling heavy loads, working in awkward body postures, and performing the same or similar tasks repetitively. Exposure to these known risk factors for MSDs increases a worker's risk of injury.

Work-related MSDs can be prevented. Ergonomics --- fitting a job to a person --- helps lessen muscle fatigue, increases productivity, and reduces the number and severity of work-related MSDs.

Impact of MSDs in the Workplace

Work-related MSDs are among the most often reported causes of lost or restricted work time.

A Process for Protecting Workers

Employers are responsible for providing a safe and healthy workplace for their workers. In the workplace, the number and severity of MSDs resulting from physical overexertion, and their associated costs, can be substantially reduced by applying ergonomic principles.

Implementing an ergonomic process is effective in reducing the risk of developing MSDs in high-risk industries as diverse as construction, food processing, firefighting, office jobs, healthcare, transportation, and warehousing.

The following are essential elements of an ergonomic process:

Provide Management Support - A strong commitment by management is critical to the overall success of an ergonomic process. Management should define clear goals and objectives for the ergonomic process, discuss them with their workers, assign responsibilities to designated staff members, and communicate clearly with the workforce.

Involve Workers - A participatory ergonomic approach, where workers are directly involved in worksite assessments, solution development and implementation are the essence of a successful ergonomic process.

Workers can:

- Identify and provide essential information about hazards in their workplaces.
- Assist in the ergonomic process by voicing their concerns and suggestions for reducing exposure to risk factors and by evaluating the changes made because of an ergonomic assessment.

Provide Training - Training is a crucial element in the ergonomic process. It ensures that workers are aware of ergonomics and its benefits, become informed about ergonomics related concerns in the workplace, and understand the importance of reporting early symptoms of MSDs.

Identify Problems - A major step in the ergonomic process is to identify and assess ergonomic problems in the workplace before they result in MSDs.

Encourage Early Reporting of MSD Symptoms - Early reporting can accelerate the job assessment and improvement process, helping to prevent or reduce the progression of symptoms, the development of serious injuries, and subsequent lost-time claims.

Implement Solutions to Control Hazards - There are many practical solutions that can be implemented to reduce, control, or eliminate workplace MSDs.

Evaluate Progress - Established evaluation and corrective action procedures are required to periodically assess the effectiveness of the ergonomic process and to ensure its continuous improvement and long-term success. As an ergonomic process is first developing, assessments should include determining whether goals set for the ergonomic process have been met and determining the success of the implemented ergonomic solutions.

ICRMA has resources to help members manage ergonomic injuries. Resources are available here. Utilize Cority for online ergonomic self-assessments. (Indicate you are an ICRMA member in the Company Name box by typing ICRMA: City of [city name]). Or see the ICRMA website for more information https://www.icrma.org/services/epl-resource-center/ .

ICRMA Training Update

Upcoming University Session December 19, 2024. The next University Session will be January 23, 2024 – Cyber Risk – Sharper Security – AI.

Please consult the ICRMA 2024-25 Risk Control Plan for added trainings and webinars.