

ARKANSAS TECH UNIVERSITY HEALTH & SAFETY POLICY

DATE: June 3, 2022

SUBJECT: Ergonomics Program

PURPOSE: The purpose of this ergonomics program is to apply Ergonomic principles to the workplace in an effort to reduce the number and severity of musculoskeletal disorders, thus decreasing workers' compensation claims and, where possible, increase productivity, quality, and efficiency. An ergonomically sound work environment maximizes employee comfort while minimizing the risk of undue physical stress.

RESPONSIBILITY: It shall be the responsibility of the Managers, Supervisors, and the Occupational Safety Coordinator for implementing this ergonomics process to help reduce the risk of MSDs by providing management support, involving workers, providing training, identifying problems, encouraging early reporting of MSD symptoms, implementing solutions, encouraging stretch and flex routines, and evaluating progress.

NOTE: An ergonomics process uses these principles to address MSD hazards. Such a process should be viewed as an ongoing function that is incorporated into daily operations, rather than as an individual project.

1. OVERVIEW

Ergonomics is the study of people and their interaction with the elements of their job or task including equipment, tools, facilities, processes, and environment. When the aspects of the work or workplace exceed the body's capabilities, the result is often a musculoskeletal disorder (MSD) that effect the muscles, nerves, blood vessels, ligaments and tendons. Examples of MSDs are

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carpal tunnel syndrome, tendinitis, muscle strains and low back injuries etc. Employees can be exposed to risk factors at work, such as lifting heavy items, bending, reaching, pushing and pulling heavy loads, working in awkward body postures and performing the same or similar task repetitively. These known risk factors for MSDs increases an employee's risk of injury.

2. PREVENTION OF MUSCULOSKELETAL DISORDERS

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. Daily Stretching also helps prevent work-related MSDs and is encouraged for all employees.

Benefits of stretching include

- Reduces muscle tension
- Increased flexibility
- Improves range of motion
- Improves circulation
- Reduces soreness
- Improves comfort and decreases fatigue
- Promotes better posture
- Relieves stress
- Helps to avoid injury

3. IMPACT OF MSDs IN THE WORKPLACE

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

4. PROCESS FOR PROTECTING WORKERS

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- **Provide management support** - A strong commitment by management is critical to the overall success of an ergonomics process. Management should define clear goals and objectives for the process, discuss them with their employee's, assign responsibilities and communicate with them.
- **Involve employee's** – A participatory ergonomic approach, where workers are involved in worksite assessments, solution development and implementation is the essence of a successful ergonomic process. Workers can identify and provide important information about hazards in their workplaces and assist by voicing their concerns and suggestions for reducing risk factors and by evaluating the changes made as a result of an ergonomic assessment.
- **Provide training** – Training is an important 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** – An important step in the ergonomic process is to identify and assess ergonomic problems in the workplace before they result in MSDs by having a periodic review of the facility, specific workstation and work practices. Risk factors include posture, duration, force, repetition, and exertion.
- **Early intervention** – 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 possible solutions that can be implemented to reduce, control or eliminate workplace MSDs. Engineering controls are the most affective which eliminates/reduces the hazard

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when possible. An example would be a lift device for a heavy object to limit force or exertion. Administrative or work practice controls may be appropriate in some cases where engineering controls cannot be implemented. An example would be a team lift for a heavy object. Personal protective equipment has only limited effectiveness when dealing with ergonomic hazards.

- **Proper stretching** – Encourage employees to participate in pre-shift stretch and flex program. This is a great opportunity for team bonding and communication while preparing each employees body for the work ahead and reducing the risk of MSD injury with all the benefits listed above.
- **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.