



Weekly Safety Briefings

Week 29: July 15-19, 2019

Ergonomics and Injuries

Ergonomics is unique to each person and work environment. The optimal ergonomic tool for one person may make no difference for another person. Ergonomics aims to optimize general processes, work conditions, and arrangements of objects in every work environment, while engineering a customized solution for each person that increases efficiency, improves work performance, and limits the risk of injury.

This week we will discuss general workplace ergonomics, individual work-related injuries, and how they relate to each other.

Monday – Workplace Ergonomics

An ergonomically friendly workplace is important to being happy and healthy. Ergonomic furniture and equipment can help alleviate labor induced stress from the body, by making positions easier to hold and tasks easier to complete.

An ergonomic workplace can also benefit the whole company in unexpected ways, such as:

- **Money:** Repetitive motion and vibration injuries can cost a company thousands of dollars in medical bills and worker's compensation, so limiting injury risk through ergonomics is a quality issue.
- **Productivity:** A work environment that promotes health, safety, and comfortability leads to better human performance, production and efficiency.
- **Product Quality:** Dealing with aches and pains from non-ergonomic tools and equipment can lead to worker frustration and fatigue and a decrease in product quality.

Today as you work, think consciously about your workplace ergonomics while you work. Make a note about 3 or 4 things that you notice. We'll talk about them later this week.

Tuesday – Ergonomics in Manufacturing Facilities

Most manufacturing facilities are not designed with worker comfort in mind, especially older buildings. The facility's goal is turning materials into usable products in the most efficient way possible. Sometimes equipment may be outdated and efficiency may come at the cost of ergonomics and worker safety.

Are tools and equipment easy and comfortable to hold? How about your work stations? Simple things like chairs and desks can make a world of a difference to the body. Monitor placement can also have an effect on your neck if you constantly have to look up or down. Lastly, are storage units easy to get to? Do you have to exert yourself bending or reaching for an item or putting something away?

Take a survey of the tools, equipment, and storage units you encounter every day on the job. What tool or work station issue is causing you pain, fatigue, backaches, headaches or other frustration? Is there one that everyone on your team has in common?



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These all play a factor in how your job affects your body so it is important to pay attention to them. If you find that the equipment you use is putting unnecessary stress on your body, let a supervisor know. There are ergonomic solutions available to all fields of work, even manufacturing.

Wednesday – Poor Ergonomics and Back Injuries

Poor ergonomic equipment can lead to bad posture, physical and mental stress, and improper lifting. During a hectic work day, it's easy to let your lifting technique slip a little as you rush to get things done. Lifting with bad form places a great amount of stress on your ligaments and the discs in your spine, and can lead to spinal injuries or muscle strains. Tools and packages without proper handles or grips only increase your risk of injury.



For smaller objects, try to get them as close to your body as possible. While keeping a neutral spine, bend at your hips and slightly bend your knees. You do not want to fully squat the weight up. Get a good grip on the object and engage your glutes and hamstrings to take the load off your back. If an object is too heavy (more than 35 pounds), do not over exert yourself trying to lift it. Find a tool or a co-worker to help you get it to where it needs to go.

If the equipment you work with is not ergonomically friendly, let a supervisor know. If your job requires lots of reaching, lifting, pulling, squatting, or pushing, then stretch beforehand to keep your muscles warm and to promote blood flow.

Thursday – Prevention Through Proper Safe Pace

While it may be impossible to completely eliminate the risk of ergonomics injuries, that doesn't mean we shouldn't try! If you feel tired or fatigued doing manual work, remember to work at a proper, steady **safe pace**. When you feel you are working too fast and getting fatigued, take breaks and do not over work yourself. Be sure to drink plenty of water, too. If you get dehydrated or your blood sugar is low, you could lose focus or get dizzy.



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Finishing early is not worth the pain and discomfort of an injury. If you find that the equipment you use is causing aches and pains or lacks proper handles and grip support, let a supervisor know.

Little things can make the biggest impacts when it comes to your body. While an ergonomically friendly work environment is ideal, a complete workplace renovation is not always practical. Listen to your body and make necessary changes to help promote health and safety.

Friday – Discussion

Have you ever been hurt on the job from repetitive motion? What happened? Do you feel that your injury still affects you or your work performance today?