



SAFETY UNLIMITED, INC.

# Weekly Safety Meeting

## Ergonomic Safety

'Ergonomics' literally means "the rules of human strength." Engineers interested in the design of work environments originated the word in the 1950s. Today, the purpose of ergonomics in the workplace is to create a better match between the worker, the work they perform, and the equipment they use. A good match increases worker productivity and reduces ergonomic injuries.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, 34% of all lost-workday injuries and illnesses are work-related musculoskeletal disorders (WMSDs). WMSDs are a result of a bad match between the worker, the work they perform, and the equipment they use. More common names for WMSDs include repetitive stress injuries, cumulative trauma disorders, tennis elbow, white finger, and the most common of all, carpal tunnel syndrome.

Ergonomics is the applied science of equipment design and arrangement, intended to maximize productivity by reducing operator fatigue and discomfort. Injuries related to ergonomics are those caused by over-use, impact, vibration, repetition, and forceful exertion. Largely injuries of the musculoskeletal systems of the body, these injuries include bursitis, tenosynovitis, tendinitis, the aforementioned carpal tunnel syndrome, and others. These problems affect the muscles, ligaments and tendons as well as the nerves and blood vessels.

Nearly every type of work or occupation has the potential for causing WMSDs. To prevent these injuries, it is important to understand the factors that contribute to them. Ergonomic factors are workplace conditions that pose the risk of injury to the musculoskeletal system of the worker.

### **Factors that Contribute to the Development of WMSDs Include:**

- Force – the strength to perform a task;
- Repetition – the frequency or number of times a task is performed during a shift;
- Posture – positioning of the body to perform a task;
- Vibration – this might come from overuse of power hand tools;
- Temperature – extreme temperatures are more harmful to the body;
- Duration – the amount of time in a workday spent performing work tasks; and
- Non-work-related issues – health, lifestyle, hobbies, and sports may add to the ergonomic risk factors.

### **Symptoms of These Injuries Are:**

- Painful joints;
- Pain, tingling or numbness in hands or feet;
- Pain in wrists, shoulders, forearms, knees, etc.;
- Back or neck pain;
- Fingers or toes turning white;
- Shooting or stabbing pains in arms or legs;
- Swelling or inflammation;
- Stiffness;
- Weakness or clumsiness in hands;
- Burning sensations; and
- Heaviness.

### **Reducing WMSDs and/or the Severity of WMSDs Includes:**

- Reducing repetition or duration when possible.
  - Job rotation can help.
- Understanding what is adjustable at your work site.
- Reporting work-related pain and discomfort. When necessary, get a medical evaluation.
- Trying new work methods and tools.
- Giving suggestions for ergonomic job improvements.
- Exercising and maintaining a healthy lifestyle.
- Using good ergonomic principles at home as well as work.
- Keeping your work area organized and the area as clean as possible.

### **Remember:**

It is important to remember to observe all work tasks associated with a job, because each task may have a risk factor. WMSDs can be associated with a combination of risk factors from multiple tasks.

Report Early Symptoms: Repetitive motion injuries are a growing concern in the workplace. Anyone who experiences numbness, tingling, or pain in his or her hands, arms, or neck should seek the advice of a supervisor. Changes in workstations and equipment can often alleviate these problems before they become chronic, and medical attention should be sought if the problem persists. Following this simple advice can help eliminate physical stress and keep employees feeling good all day.

**AWKWARD POSITIONS...UNSAFE CONDITIONS!**

### Safety Meeting Sign-In Sheet

Supervisor:	Subject:
Location:	Date:
Conducted By:	Trainer Signature:

Name (print clearly)	Signature	Comments / Safety Concerns / Training Requests

