

Creating A Safer Workplace

Did you know that October is National Ergonomics Month?

The concept of ergonomics seems relatively new although it is not. The word itself ergonomics (noun) is the study of workplace design. The study of how a workplace and the equipments used there can best be designed for comfort, efficiency, safety, and productivity. Or the design of workplace or equipment. Those factors or qualities in the design of something, especially a workplace or equipment used by people at work, that contribute to comfort, efficiency, safety, and ease of use. It considers physical, cognitive, social, organizational, environmental, and other relevant human factors in the design and arrangement of things people use. The word itself was derived from the Greek words ergon (work) and nomos (laws) to mean "the science of work," ergonomics studies the interaction between humans and systems.

Within the CSPE group worker compensation program the majority of workplace injuries are sprains and strains. The goal of CSPE in helping employers create safe work places is to prevent these injuries from happening in the first place. To that end CSPE and their partner State Fund, have trained Ergonomic Consultants available to help employers and their employees interact with their work environment safely and efficiently.

Ergonomic issues include: Working postures; Materials handling; Repetitive movements; Work-related musculoskeletal disorders; Workplace layout; and Safety and health

Statistically speaking, approximately 1 of every 3 workers will lose time due to injury during their first 12 months of employment. Strains and sprains lead the way (38.8%) and the median time away from work is 10 days. According to the WCIRB the average cost of a lost time injury in CA was over \$43,000. Injuries of this nature generally happen because new workers are not fully instructed on how to do the job. Your placement process should focus on fitting the job to the worker in furthering your goal to prevent injuries before they happen.

Creating Your Company's Safety Program, Simple and Easy to Apply Basics:

- **Physical Requirements.** A pre-employment physical based on work demands is a good place to start. Creating an essential function job description and placing it in the hands of a medical professional can tell you if the new hire is physically fit for your specific job.
- **Safety Coaching.** Have a supervisor or experienced lead worker show the new hire exactly how to do the job. Set aside enough time for both to ensure the task is being performed correctly and safely.
- **Clear Safety Rules.** Review your work and safety rules with the new-hire and be certain they understand them. Use the "show me" technique. Explain the consequences if the rules are violated and make it known that your safety rules are enforced.
- **Observe and Follow-up.** Assign a supervisor or lead person to observe the new-hire to ensure they are doing the job safely and effectively. Do this on a formal basis or it won't happen. Professional safety consultants use this tool of observation and so can your supervisors. Build it into the supervisory job description.
- **Effective Safety Meetings.** Attendance at safety meetings should be 100% and should require active participation not just passive learning. A person will learn more when they are actively involved in the learning process. Implementation of these proven safety management techniques will result in fewer injuries. New-hires will know exactly what is expected. Embark on a change for the better to your organization's safety culture. It will pay off in productivity and quality for your business.

Once your safety program is under way use these proven control measures to prevent strains and sprains:

Control Measures to Prevent Strains and Sprains

Strains

- Use proper lifting techniques
- Establish maximum weight limit that 1 person can safely lift
- Provide material handling lifting devices where practical
- Provide training to life in teams.

Sprains

- Stretch & warm up muscles prior to exerting force
- Rotate use of hands whenever possible
- Make sure tools have comfortable handles

To help you create your own written Company Ergonomics Program, the following resources may be downloaded for free and customized to fit your specific need.

Visit the CSPE Safety Center at: <http://www.cspe.com/SafetyCenter/SafetyResources.htm> This is a one stop shop leading to resources that you need to complete your safety program easily.

Additional Resources Available to State Fund Policy Holders:

State Fund offers several ergonomics services to our policyholders online at <http://www.scif.com/safety/Index.html>. Our team of ergonomic consultants all hold professional certifications from the Oxford Research Institute (ORI) or Board of Certification in Professional Ergonomics (BCPE). State Fund's ergonomics experts work to improve the fit between the worker and the workplace in order to:

- Increase productivity, comfort, health, and safety.
- Reduce injury, illness, and the likelihood of errors.

In recognition of National Ergonomics Month, SCIF is highlighting the value of workplace efficiencies and control of risk factors. Improving worker safety and health is a continual process, and everybody should think of ergonomics as not just an 8-to-5, Monday through Friday job, but a 24/7 effort.

Related Links

State Fund Safety & Health Services: <http://www.scif.com/safety/Index.html>

National Ergonomics Month (official site): <http://www.hfesnem.org/>

-
-
-
-