



Ergonomics On the Job

Lifting In the Office

While frequent, heavy lifting isn't typically a requirement of most office jobs, some lifting is inevitable no matter where you work. The way that materials are stored and moved around the office can create risk factors for injury. It can be as simple as an employee picking up a box of copy paper, or as complex as all the tasks a mail room employee must perform to deliver the mail including lifting, carrying, pushing, pulling and sorting.

Common repetitive motion injuries from lifting and carrying include injuries to the low back, upper back and shoulders. Injuries can also occur to the abdomen, hips, knees and ankles. **As these types of injuries account for one-third of all the injury**

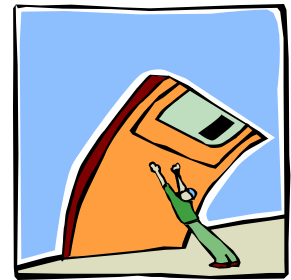
claims in the office each year, lifting and other materials handling should be included in the worksite analysis process.

Typical Weights of Items in the Office:

- Computer Manuals, (set) 6 ½ lbs.
- 2" 3-ring binder, full 4 lbs.
- File folder, overstuffed 4 lbs.
- Copy paper, single ream 5 ½ lbs.
- Copy paper, whole box 42 lbs.
- Computer monitor, 15" 41 lbs.
- Laser printer

- Laptop computer, (in case) 55 lbs.
- Side Chair 15 ½ lbs.
- Recycling barrel, ½ full 28 ½ lbs.
- 37 lbs.

Evaluate lifting and carrying tasks themselves, looking at the location where items are stored and where they are used, and observing employee's work practices when they lift.



Chronic Overtime Risks

What triggers a look into ergonomic factors in the workplace? Aside from the obvious – an increase in injuries and complaints of discomfort by workers – is the increase in overtime work. A study by the University of Massachusetts identifies that workers who work chronic overtime were 61% more likely to become hurt or ill. It was discovered that a 60-hour work week resulted in a greater risk based on a three

year study of 11,000 records from 110,236 U.S. workers.

If your workplace routinely maintains a schedule of longer workdays, it may be prudent to take preventative steps into analyzing the effect of overtime on your workforce.

Special points of interest:

- *How to prevent lifting hazards in the office*
- *The risks of overtime work*
- *Training for Public Employers*

Ergonomics Training for Public Employers

Based on claims data, schools, cities and counties have the highest claims frequency and costs of all public employers. The leading type of injury is lumbar back strain, although other types of cumulative trauma disorders (CTDs), such as carpal tunnel syndrome, are also significant.

A proven effective method of reducing the risk of CTDs is to establish an ergonomics process that includes, among other things, employee training. Essential to the training process is to provide information on:

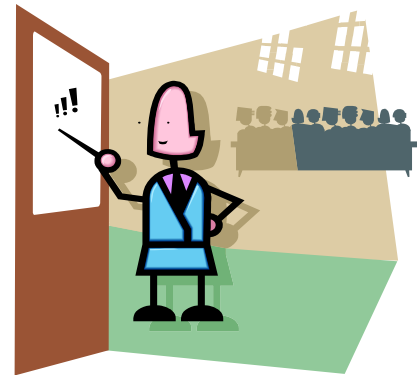
- Identifying workplace risk factors

- Symptoms of CTDs that result from exposure to risk factors
- The employer's process for addressing and controlling those risk factors

Employees that are identified as ergonomic team members and managers/supervisors should also be provided with training in ergonomic job analysis, problem identification and control measures.

Due to the diversity of positions, addressing CTDs among public employees may be more challenging than for other employers in more defined industries. By implementing an ergonomic process that

incorporates training as well as other best practices, public employers can rely on a reduction of injuries as well as an increase in productivity and efficiency.



Stretching for Success

Stretching to prevent repetitive motion injuries has been shown to be an effective tool in overall employee health. The following tips should be remembered when stretching on the job:

- Stretch to the point you feel mild tension.
- Stretch for at least 5-30 seconds in order to achieve maximum results.

- Breathe slowly, rhythmically and under control.
- Do not bounce.
- Relax your mind and body as much as possible.
- Any stretch that becomes painful as you hold the stretch is an overstretch.

It is beneficial to incorporate stretching throughout the workday, especially for employees whose job does not require a lot of physical movement. Computer software with timed breaks for stretching are useful tools in the fight against RMIs.

“Stretch for at least 5-30 seconds in order to achieve maximum results”

Pelletier & Associates, Inc.

Pelletier & Associates, Inc. is a disability management services company with expertise in ergonomic workstation evaluation and ergonomics training, as well as return-to-work program development, job modification and workers' compensation. With over 19 years of experience, we

target employers' concerns over high absenteeism and workers' comp claims by providing solutions and recommendations for worksite ergonomic problems.

If you would like more information, or for a complimentary workstation evaluation, please

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