

UNIVERSITY OF TOLEDO

SUBJECT: ERGONOMICS

Procedure No: S-08-025

PROCEDURE STATEMENT

The recognition and evaluation of workplace conditions that may cause or contribute to the occurrence of occupational injuries and illnesses. This policy shall be in accordance with other existing policies and procedures.

PURPOSE OF PROCEDURE

To establish and define the ergonomic program elements in place, which are designed to promote safety and health, reduce injuries and illness, increase productivity, decrease absenteeism, and increase job satisfaction and comfort, via appropriate design of jobs to fit the physical and psychological characteristics of the worker.

DEFINITION

Occupational injuries and illnesses may result when there is a mismatch between the worker and his/her environment. A comprehensive ergonomics assessment examines the worker characteristics, the task characteristics, the environmental characteristics, and the work practices. The most common occupational injuries/illnesses are cumulative trauma disorders (CTD), which result from extreme or awkward postures, repetitive motions, excessive forces or forceful exertions, excessive contact stresses, vibration and/or extreme temperatures.

PROCEDURE

WORKSITE ANALYSIS/EVALUATION

Data obtained through Injury Illness Incident Reports by the Environmental Health and Radiation Safety (EHRS) Department is used to assess the need for ergonomic evaluation and analysis. Managers or employees can request surveillance by contacting any member of the Environmental Health and Radiation Safety Department at 419-530-3600.

Environmental Health and Radiation Safety seeks to identify potential trends in casual factors, incidence or severity of employee illnesses and injuries as well as looking at specific single occurrences. Occurrences involving "ergonomic disorders" are provided to the EHRS for analysis and/or investigation.

EHRS will conduct worksite analyses as needed. A worksite analysis describes and evaluates employee exposures to equipment, jobs, processes, workstations, and tasks, and determines the extent to which exposures are or may become hazardous. This analysis focuses on the stressors that result from the relationship between employees, their jobs, and the work processes.

Analysis could include elemental job or task analysis, job safety analysis or assessment of the impact of work place design. Analysis seeks to identify stressors in workplace design and equipment, work techniques/materials, methods, repetition rates, posture or force required, and to provide input into redesign of the worksite or job task.

Computer workstation evaluations can be completed by the employee using the following "OSHA etool" <http://www.osha.gov/SLTC/etools/computerworkstations/index.html> .

PREVENTION AND CONTROL

The conclusions of the job site analysis are presented to the employee and manager along with recommendations for worksite/job modifications. The elimination, prevention, or reduction of identified ergonomic stressors is the goal of analyses. The conclusions of EHRS are provided to the the appropriate Manager for action and implementation.

Where work place modifications are considered, Materials Management and Facilities Maintenance representatives may also be key team members.

HEALTH MANAGEMENT

Through the transitional return to work program, temporary flexible work accommodations are investigated which may also aid individuals on restricted duty in preventing and recovering from ergonomic injuries. The goal of this program is to provide employees an early opportunity to return to work after a physician has determined they may be capable of performing certain activities within the scope of their regular position.

TRAINING & EDUCATION

Ergonomic information is available on the Environmental Health and Radiation Safety Department website for both office and laboratory employees.

Once an employee reports to their specific job, their manager should also ensure that employees receive specific training on safe practices or techniques that are applicable to the tasks the employee will be involved in. Health Science Campus managers should also ensure that the employee take his/her annual safety test to remain current with ergonomic information.

A third type of training is that which may be recommended as a result of an ergonomic evaluation or accident investigation. This would most likely be job or task specific. In some cases, Occupational or Rehabilitation Medicine staff may be called in to assist in such training to ensure that modified procedures or workplace design do not exacerbate other medical conditions.

Source: Safety & Health Committee

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