

WEEKLY SAFETY MEETING

FOR THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY

SAFETY MEETING OUTLINES

Box 700, Frankfort, IL 60423

815-464-0200

Vol. 23

No. 35

Week of 8/29/2022

Company Name _____ Job Name _____ Date _____

ERGONOMICS

Frequently we hear references to health issues such as ergonomics, repetitive motion injuries, and carpal tunnel syndrome. We also hear warnings to avoid activities that may cause chronic pain. The office worker should have a workstation with a comfortable design. The factory worker should be cautioned about repetitive motion injuries. We see consumer advertising for ergonomically designed products from snow shovels to computer keyboards. How much of this is real and how much is just hype? Should you be concerned about ergonomics? For that matter, what is ergonomics?

Ergonomics is an area of applied science that is concerned with the design and arrangement of things that people use, so that people can use these things safely. Ergonomically designed equipment is used to prevent injury and discomfort, whether the activity is at work or at home.

OSHA has a new standard regarding ergonomics that covers general industry employers and employees. OSHA maintains that under the new standard an average of 300,000 employees "can be spared from painful, potentially disabling injuries" each year. Separate rules for construction, agriculture, and maritime employers are planned for a later date. Ergonomic hazards can result in a category of injuries known as musculoskeletal disorders, or MSDs. OSHA defines MSDs as injuries or disorders of the muscles, tendons, joints, spinal discs, nerves, ligaments, and cartilage. The general industry standard identifies the following ergonomic risk factors but does not quantify or qualify them: force, repetition, awkward or static postures, contact stress, vibration, and cold temperatures. Repeated exposure to only one ergonomic risk factor may be enough to cause an MSD.

So why are we talking about ergonomics if there isn't a standard covering construction? The number one reason is that you could be injured and nobody wants that to happen. Secondly, according to Alexis Herman, the Secretary of Labor, "musculoskeletal disorders such as back injuries and carpal tunnel syndrome are the most prevalent, most expensive, and most preventable workplace injuries in the country." Think about those risk factors for a moment. Are there any construction jobs that involve one or more of them? Of course! Think about the rod buster that ties reinforcing steel all day long. What about the worker installing sheet rock? How about the laborer that uses a jack hammer?

There may not be an ergonomics standard for construction yet, but that doesn't mean you're safe. Learn about ergonomics. Take breaks from repetitive jobs when possible, and look carefully at the job you do to see if the risk factors exist. Watch for new versions of tools on the market that have improved designs. As with most injuries, prevention is better than treatment.

SAFETY REMINDER

Awareness of potential hazards and training in how to avoid them will keep you safe on the job.

Special Topics For Your Project _____

Employee Safety Recommendations _____

Reviewed MSDS # _____ Subject _____

Meeting Attended By _____

Supervisor's Signature _____