

Introduction

Workplace injuries related to ergonomics which lead to Musculoskeletal Disorders (MSD) are among the most frequently reported cause of lost or restricted work time. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, MSD cases account for 1/3 of all worker injury cases in the US. More importantly, MSDs caused by workplace ergonomic issues can severely impact a worker's quality of life. This week we will look at what MSDs are, ergonomic risk factors, personal risk factors, and controlling these risk factors to keep employees safe.

Monday – Musculoskeletal Disorders (MSD)

Poor workplace ergonomics can be a contributing factor to causing or aggravating musculoskeletal disorders, although there could be many other factors as well. In general, musculoskeletal disorders are injuries of the muscles, nerves, blood vessels, ligaments and tendons that could lead to permanent persistent pain and physical limitations. The rest of the week, we will focus on identifying risk factors and discussing prevention methods to help avoid these conditions.

Tuesday – Ergonomic Risk Factors

Workplace ergonomic risk factors such as awkward postures, excessive forces, and high task repetition, especially when combined, place workers at increased risk of developing MSD. When a high percentage of workers are experiencing pain and discomfort, there's a good change an ergonomic improvement opportunity exists.

Wednesday – Individual Risk Factors

It's also important to recognize that not everyone with ergonomic exposures at work develops an MSD, and not everyone that develops an MSD is exposed to ergonomic risk factors at work. In most cases, individual risk factors such as poor work practices, poor physical fitness levels, and poor health habits play a significant part in the development of an MSD.

Thursday – Prevention

Musculoskeletal disorders occur when exposure to risk factors, such as those we discussed earlier this week, causes excessive fatigue, and does not allow your body to fully recover. In order to avoid MSDs, you must control the risk factors to allow proper recovery from fatigue. The good news is, there are many steps your organization can take right away to address these issues.

- Ergonomic controls:
 - Train employees on identifying risk factors
 - Report early signs of these risk factors
 - Develop improved techniques and tools to reduce these factors
- Individual controls:
 - Warm up for work
 - Stay fit and healthy
 - Use good workplace practices and techniques



Weekly Safety Briefings

Week 45 – November 5, 2021
Ergonomics

Friday – Open Discussion

This week has provided a broad overview of musculoskeletal disorders, risk factors and prevention methods. We've barely scrapped the surface of addressing workplace ergonomics but hopefully this will spark some production discussions. Here are a few questions to get things started.

- Do you feel you could identify an ergonomic risk in your workplace?
- Do you currently have an ergonomic risk in your daily duties?
- What suggestions do you have on how to reduce the risks?