



YCPARMIA Safety Journal

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Fitting Jobs to People

What do OSHA's new rules mean to you?

Ergonomics is the science of fitting jobs to the people who work in them. The goal of our ergonomics program is to reduce work-related musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs). MSDs are developed by workers when a major part of their jobs involve reaching, bending over, lifting heavy objects, using continuous force, working with vibrating equipment, or doing repetitive motions. In January of this year, new rules governing workplace ergonomics went into effect. These regulations were created by OSHA (the Occupational Safety and Health Administration). OSHA is the federal agency in charge of workplace safety and health. The new rules are designed to reduce the number and severity of MSDs developed on the job.

In a nutshell, the new ergonomic regulations require companies to analyze all the jobs in the workplace to look for MSD hazards. Whenever and wherever we find ergonomic hazards, we will take immediate steps to reduce those hazards. We will also respond promptly to your reports of job-related MSDs and help you get the necessary attention from a health care professional as soon as possible. If it's necessary to place you on light duty for a period of time while your body is healing, or if you need to be off work as a result of an MSD, your wages and benefits will be protected. If you'd like to see a copy of the complete text of the regulations, please ask your supervisor. We're doing all we can to comply with these new regulations. But we need your help. Here's are some ways to reduce the risk of MSDs in our workplace:

- **Report all MSD hazards to your supervisor right away.** We need to know about them so that we can take steps to protect everyone against them.
- **Report any signs or symptoms of MSDs.** Talk to your supervisor as soon as you start feeling symptoms of work-related MSDs. (See sidebar for common signs and symptoms.)
- **Share your suggestions for fixing ergonomic problems.** Talk to your supervisor and tell him or her about your ideas. If all of us work together, we can minimize or eliminate the causes of MSDs in our workplace.
- **Take ergonomic training seriously.** It's designed to help protect you from painful injuries. In training you will learn how to recognize ergonomic hazards and how to take action to avoid them and protect your health.
- **Follow work rules and procedures.** They've been set up to help prevent MSDs. Don't take chances, and don't take shortcuts. Your health is too important. We all need you where you are—right here on the job.

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WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF MSDs?

Workers suffering from MSDs may experience less strength for gripping and less range of motion. In extreme cases, a person may experience loss of muscle function and inability to do everyday tasks.

Here are some common symptoms you should watch out for:

- Painful joints
- Tingling or numbness in hands or feet
- Shooting or stabbing pains in arms or legs
- Swelling, inflammation, burning sensation
- Pain in wrists, shoulders, forearms, knees
- Fingers or toes turning white
- Back and neck pain or stiffness

WHAT ARE THE CAUSES OF MSDs?

Workplace MSDs are caused by exposure to the following risk factors:

- **Repetition.** Doing the same motions over and over again places stress on the muscles and tendons.
- **Forceful exertions.** Forced physical effort required to perform a task or to control equipment or tools.
- **Awkward postures.** Awkward postures include repeated or prolonged reaching, twisting, bending, kneeling, squatting, working overhead with hands or arms, or holding fixed positions.
- **Contact stress.** Pressing the body against a hard or sharp edge can result in placing too much pressure on nerves, tendons, and blood vessels. For example, using the palm of your hand as a hammer can increase your risk of an MSD.
- **Vibration.** Operating vibrating tools such as sanders, grinders, chippers, drills, and saws can lead to nerve damage.

Give Your Back a Break

Try these strategies to prevent painful injuries

Because so many demands are placed on your back, you probably won't be surprised to hear that it is the most injury-prone part of your body. Only the common cold accounts for more lost work days. The good news is that there's a lot you can do to keep your back healthy.

If your job requires sitting for long periods of time . . .

- Sit up straight with your feet flat on the floor and your knees bent at a 90-degree angle. If you're short, use a stool for your feet.
- Keep your lower back flat against a firm backrest. A lumbar support pillow may give added comfort.
- When reaching to the side, turn your whole body rather than twisting part of it.
- Arrange your work area to avoid repeated bending and reaching.
- During scheduled breaks, get up and walk around. Gentle stretching can also help relieve tense back and neck muscles.

If your job requires standing for long periods of time . . .

- Place one foot on a small stool or box and then alternate feet from time to time.
- Stand up straight and keep your head aligned with your back and hips.
- Avoid bending and twisting the trunk area at the same time. Turn your whole body as a unit.
- Shift position frequently. Stretch gently to loosen up the muscles in your back.

PPE—It's All the Rage!

Use required PPE to protect yourself from hazards

OSHA has determined that the hazards addressed by personal protective equipment (PPE) are present in all workplaces—even yours. That's why you need to use required PPE.

- **Safety eyewear** protects your eyes from flying materials, dust, fumes, or light.
- **Gloves, clothing, and footwear** protect you from heat, cuts, chemicals, etc.
- **Hard hats** protect your head from blows, punctures, electrical shock and burns.
- **Ear protectors** prevent hearing damage.
- **Respirators** protect against inhaling dangerous substances.

Whenever you're assigned PPE:

- Inspect it before each use—and don't use it if it's damaged. Replace it or have it repaired, if it is safe to do so.
- Get a good fit. If it doesn't fit you properly, it probably won't protect you properly.
- Use it all the time to protect yourself from injury and illness. Workplace hazards are always present—even when you least expect them.
- Follow instructions for PPE removal, storage, cleaning, and disposal.



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HANDS ON TIPS FOR HANDTRUCKS

Whenever you need to move a heavy load with a handtruck, be sure to:

- Wear heavy-duty work gloves with a good grip. ANSI-approved steel-toed shoes are also recommended.
- Place the heaviest objects on the bottom.
- To avoid back strain, use proper lifting techniques in loading and unloading.
- Store the load forward, with weight borne by the axle/wheels.
- Make sure you can see over the load. When the load passes chin level, the chance of an accident increases dramatically.
- Push, don't pull.
- Think about the route in advance; plan for doorways, blind corners, etc.
- Watch out for pedestrians and vehicles, objects on the floor, obstruction in the way, and the edges of platforms or docks.
- Park the handtruck out of the way. Don't leave it in an aisle or blocking an emergency exit.

OFF-THE-JOB SAFETY STATISTICS

Many of us are safety-conscious at work, but when we get home, we forget to use some of the same precautions.

- It may surprise you to know that 3 out of 4 deaths and over half of all injuries suffered by workers occurred *off* the job.
- Off-the-job accidents account for 25 percent more lost work days by workers than accidents on the job.
- Of all off-the-job deaths, over 60 percent are motor vehicle accidents. The rest occur at home or in public places.
- Falls from ladders are a leading cause of off-the-job injuries.

Handling Emergencies

Know how to proceed and protect yourself

When a co-worker is injured, you have to act fast—and effectively:

- Call for medical help—*immediately*. Know whom to call.
- Know where to find first-aid kits.
- Check to see if the victim is breathing.
- Administer first aid or CPR, as needed, if you've been trained.
- Don't move an injured person except to save the person's life.
- Bring help to the victim; don't bring the victim to the help.
- Don't give any medication without a doctor's supervision.
- Wait for emergency medical assistance if you're not sure what to do.

Keep in mind: When administering first aid, you should take "universal precautions." Universal precautions means treating all blood and body fluids as though they are infected, which means taking all precautions necessary to avoid direct contact.

The most common means of avoiding direct contact is to use the proper personal protective equipment (PPE). PPE that may be required includes gloves, face masks or goggles with side shields, and protective clothing.

Even though the actual risks are fairly small, it's very important to take these precautions if there's any question at all about the possibility of exposure when giving emergency first aid.

Rate Your Safety Sense

Measure your accident-prevention power

How would you prevent an accident in these situations?

1. You see water on the floor in a poorly lit area of the stockroom. Do you:
(A) clean up the spill immediately?
(B) make a mental note to clean up the spill later?
2. You see a new employee run down the aisle and around the corner. Do you:
(A) explain that rules against running are designed to prevent slips, trips, and falls?
(B) mind your own business since you're not his boss?
3. You see a machine with no guard over its moving parts. do you:
(A) immediately report the missing guard and make sure no one uses the machine until the guard is back in place?
(B) use the machine without the guard, since your job will only take a minute?
4. You come across a container without a label in a hazardous materials storage area. Do you:
(A) report the missing label to your supervisor immediately?
(B) open the container to see what's inside?

Your safety sense should tell you that the answer is always A. Simple acts can prevent big accidents!

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SAFETY MEASURES

Want a safe place to work?

- Know how to store chemicals, gases, and liquids in your area.
- Turn in or report—and don't use—any damaged equipment or PPE.
- Dispose of hazardous substances by the safe method prescribed.
- Clean up the work area immediately after completing each task.
- Clean up spilled liquids right away and respect "wet floor" signs.
- Never pick up broken glass with bare hands.
- Don't allow scrap and debris to accumulate and create a fire hazard.
- Return tools and supplies to their proper location.

NIGHT MOVES—ON THE ROAD

When driving at night, take these extra precautions:

- Make sure mirrors, lights, and windshield are clean.
- Never wear sunglasses.
- Make sure head and tail lights are working properly.
- Turn on headlights as soon as it begins getting dark.
- Use high beams only if no one is in front of you or coming toward you.
- Give your eyes a moment to adjust to the dark before you start driving.
- If headlights from an oncoming car make it difficult to see the road, focus on the right edge of the pavement.
- Reduce your speed. You should be able to stop in the distance your headlights provide.

California Workplace Incidents

“Bad Cut Dooms Worker”

A worker for the Desert Sands Unified School District in Indio was electrocuted **July 20** after cutting through an electrical box at a middle school in the desert community. The incident occurred at Glenn Middle School when the worker was working in a 480-volt electrical box cutting plastic electrical ties and inadvertently cut through a hot wire and was electrocuted, according to Department of Industrial Relations press officer Erika Monterroza.

July 21: An employee of Golden State Foods in City of Industry was killed after being crushed between a robotic palletizer and a roller conveyor when she got caught while trying to clear boxes. The 40-year-old woman apparently was attempting to clear a jammed package.

A U.S. Forest Service firefighter was killed the same day from injuries suffered while performing “routine rappel proficiency skill training” at the Backbone helicopter base in Willow Creek, according to Gov. Schwarzenegger’s press office. Thomas Marovich of Hayward, 20, was a second-year apprentice working with the Chester Helitack Crew in the Lassen National Forest fighting the Backbone fire.

July 22: Five workers for the California Department of Water Resources were injured, one seriously, when a section of wall collapsed while the employees were testing a ball valve at Oroville Dam.

The workers were in the Hyatt Powerplant in the base of the dam to test the valve, which controls the flow of cool water intended to help downstream fish habitat. A 6’10” steel panel that separated the valve from a water diversion tunnel collapsed, according to a newspaper report, and debris hit the workers. One was seriously injured, three spent the day at a local hospital and the fifth worker was treated and released at the scene.

July 23: A window cleaner was killed in Southern California after falling from a lift. The worker for California Cleaner was cleaning window awnings at the four-story Loews Santa Monica Beach Hotel when he fell from the lift approximately 25 feet to the ground.

The same day, another worker died from injuries received four days earlier. The employee of Environmental Pneumatics in Visalia was working at an elevated location July 19 and fell about 35 feet while attempting to retrieve a part.

Also on July 23, a California Department of Transportation employee was killed on Highway 99 in Lodi when he was struck by a passing motorist. The worker, 53-year-old Donald Lichliter, was a tree maintenance lead worker assigned to special crews. He had worked for Caltrans for more than 27 years.

July 25: An employee of Dole Enterprises in Bakersfield was killed after being pinned under some tubes when a pipe storage rack collapsed. The worker was pronounced dead at the scene by the Kern County Fire Department.

A worker for AT&T in Los Angeles escaped serious injury the same day when he was struck a “glancing blow” by a piece of concrete while working in a manhole, according to the Los Angeles Fire Department. The worker was “a bit dazed” but not seriously injured, LAFD reports.

MORE HEAT SWEEPS: DOSH reports that it has conducted 167 inspections of outdoor workplaces since California’s hot season began July 11. In those inspections, DOSH has identified more than 200 alleged violations. So far in 2009, DOSH has conducted more than 1,700 inspections, issuing citations for 472 alleged violations and more than \$415,000 in proposed penalties