
GLENN COUNTY HEALTH AND SAFETY

ERGONOMICS PROGRAM

PURPOSE:

The County of Glenn is committed to providing a safe and healthful work environment, including improving the comfort and well-being of employees by identifying and correcting ergonomic risk factors in the workplace.

The purpose of an ergonomics program is to apply ergonomic principles to the workplace in an effort to reduce the number and severity of Musculoskeletal Disorders (MSDs), thus decreasing workers' compensation claims and, where possible, increase productivity, quality and efficiency. An ergonomically sound work environment maximizes employee comfort while minimizing the risk of undue physical stress.

The information presented here will assist management, supervisors and employees in early intervention and prevention strategies that could play a significant role in eliminating or minimizing the physical effects of Repetitive Motion Injuries (RMIs) and MSDs to the extent feasible.

DEFINITIONS

Ergonomics: is the science of fitting work or workplaces to the human body to help avoid injury or illnesses.

Musculoskeletal Disorder (MSD): means any injury or disorder of the muscles, tendons, ligaments, joints, nerves, blood vessels or related soft tissue, including a sprain, strain, or inflammation that may be caused or aggravated by work.

Repetitive Motion Injury (RMI): is the term used for health disorders caused by repeated stress due to ergonomic hazards. This is a class of musculoskeletal disorders.

PROGRAM:

This Ergonomic program promotes employees' health and comfort through:

- Education and training.
- Worksite ergonomic evaluations.
- Written recommendations.

Employees experiencing musculoskeletal pain or discomfort should report this to their supervisor in a timely manner. The supervisor should report this pain or discomfort to the department's safety representative in a timely manner. Early identification of ergonomic hazards is a key component of an effective ergonomics program.

When musculoskeletal pain or discomfort is reported:

1. The department safety representative, or their designee, should contact the County Assistant Safety Officer at 934-6455 and request an ergonomic evaluation.
2. The Assistant Safety Officer will contact an ergonomic specialist to schedule an ergonomic evaluation.
3. Upon completion of the Ergonomic Evaluation, the ergonomic specialist will provide a written recommendation. This recommendation will be sent to the department of the injured worker and a copy will be forwarded to the County's Assistant Safety Officer.
 - a. The department shall work with the injured employee to implement the recommendations, as feasible.
 - b. The County's Assistant Safety Officer is available to assist with the implementation of the recommendations, as needed.
 - c. The injured employee shall make every effort to work with their safety representative in implementing the recommendations and giving the recommendations an opportunity to work.
4. The Assistant Safety Officer shall follow up with the department requesting the ergonomic evaluation to ensure the evaluation was completed and ensure the ergonomic issue was resolved.

RISK FACTORS

Poor workplace design can present ergonomic risk factors called stressors. Supervisors and employees should be aware of these stressors. These stressors include but are not limited to following:

- Repetition – the number of motions or movements that are performed per cycle or per shift.
- Force – the muscles used to produce the force in order to perform necessary activities such as lifting, grasping, pinching, pushing, etc.
- Extreme postures – when muscles are required to work at a level near or at their maximum capacity.
- Static postures – a special type of awkward posture which occurs when a body part is not moving, but is still doing work. Examples include sitting in a chair or holding an object.
- Contact pressure – the pressure from resting part of the body against a sharp edge or corner. Resting the wrists or forearms on an edge of a desk while typing is one example.
- Vibration – exposure to local vibration occurs when a specific part of the body comes in contact with a vibrating object, such as power hand tool. Exposure to whole-body vibration can occur while standing or sitting in vibrating environments or objects, such as when operating heavy-duty vehicles or large machinery.
- Cold temperatures – reduce the natural elasticity of the body and reduce the sensation of touch (tactile feedback). In order to get the same amount of tactile feedback an employee may exert more force than is necessary.

The following are commonly used methods to resolve ergonomic risk factors:

- Reduce the frequency of the repetitive activity.
- Reduce the total duration of the activity.
- Alternate tasks and vary work routine, which relieves static posture, reduces fatigue and rests the eyes.

- Change body positions and posture, reduce the need to bend or assume awkward postures while working, or rearrange work space or items used during work.
- Reduce the amount of force needed to do the work.
- Provide reasonably appropriate devices to reduce the force, strain, fatigue, and awkward postures. Examples are the use of adjustable chairs and work surfaces, task lighting, glare filters, foot rests and properly designed tools and equipment.
- Consider the entire physical work environment to include temperature, noise, housekeeping, lighting/glare, general safe work practices and similar concerns.

SYMPTOMS

Symptoms of MSDs identify that one or more ergonomic stressors may be present. There may be individual difference in susceptibility and symptoms among employees performing similar tasks. Any symptoms below are to be taken seriously. Symptoms include, but not limited to, the following:

- Numbness
- Tightness
- Tingling
- Swelling
- Pain
- Stiffness
- Redness

RESPONSIBILITY

Management and supervisors are responsible for informing employees of this program as well as ensuring its implementation and enforcement.

Employees shall:

1. Be familiar and comply with this program.
2. Report musculoskeletal pain or discomfort in a timely manner.
3. Cooperate with resulting ergonomic evaluation(s).
4. Cooperate with supervisor in developing a strategy to implement the evaluation's recommendations and comply with the strategy.
5. Attend required training.

TRAINING

An ergonomics training program is intended to enhance the ability of management, supervisors and employees to recognize work-related ergonomic risk factors and to understand and apply appropriate control strategies. The training program will include but not be limited to:

- Definition of ergonomics.
- Ergonomic stressors.
- Types of MSDs.
- Symptoms of MSDs.
- Reporting MSDs.
- Strategies for handling MSDs.

All new employees shall receive information on ergonomics during their new hire orientation.

Employees that experience musculoskeletal pain or discomfort should be provided with additional training and information. This may be accomplished via any of the following methods:

- Safety meetings.
- Tailgate Topic handouts.
- MemberLink On-line Training.
- Classroom trainings on Ergonomics.

RECORD KEEPING

Record keeping is an important component of an effective Ergonomics Program. The following types of documentation will be maintained:

- Sign-in sheet for training sessions.
- Safety meeting handouts/information.
- Ergonomic Evaluations.
- Corrective Actions taken as a result of Ergonomic Evaluations.

TO LEARN MORE

Employees seeking further information on the issue of ergonomics should review the following resources:

- MemberLink On-line Courses (General Office Ergonomics and Industrial Ergonomics). If you do not currently have a User ID for the MemberLink program contact your department's safety representative or the County's Assistant Safety Officer.
- Cal OSHA Ergonomic Publications at <http://www.dir.ca.gov/dosh/PubOrder.asp> - Topics such as Easy Ergonomics for Desktop Users, Ergonomic Guidelines for Manual Material Handling, and Easy Ergonomics: A Guide to Selecting Non-Powered Hand Tools.
- U.S. Department of Labor, Occupational Safety and Health Administration's Computer Workstation e-tool at <http://www.osha.gov/SLTC/etools/computerworkstations/index.html/>.