

Chapter 10

ERGONOMICS

A. References

1. SPPM 2.74 Ergonomics
http://www.wsu.edu/manuals_forms/HTML/SPPM/2_General_Workplace_Safety/2.74_Ergonomics.htm
2. SPPM 2.24 Accident Injury Report Form
http://www.wsu.edu/manuals_forms/HTML/SPPM/2_General_Workplace_Safety/2.24_Reporting_Accidental_Injuries_and_Work-Related_Illnesses.htm
3. SPPM 2.26 Supervisor Investigation Report
http://www.wsu.edu/manuals_forms/HTML/SPPM/2_General_Workplace_Safety/2.26_Investigating_Accidents.htm

B. Purpose and Scope

Sprains and strains are among WSU's most common workplace injuries. This chapter supports the systematic reduction and elimination of workplace ergonomic hazards through early identification and mitigation. Hazard mitigation includes the following:

- Establishing clear responsibilities for identifying, evaluating and eliminating ergonomic hazards;
- Training employees to recognize ergonomic hazards and apply ergonomic principles;
- Encouraging preventative strategies; and,
- Instituting procedures sustaining the systematic identification, reduction and elimination of workplace ergonomic hazards.

C. Responsibilities

Directors:

- Incorporating ergonomic equipment fees/expenses, such as ergonomic chairs, materials handling equipment and computer desks into departmental budgets and funding requests.

Supervisors:

- Identifying ergonomic concerns;
- Evaluating ergonomic concerns identified by employees;
- Providing or arranging for ergonomic training; and,
- Making recommendations to reduce the potential for musculoskeletal injury.

To assist with identifying potential ergonomic hazards, supervisors and employees are encouraged to request an ergonomic evaluation from the EH&S Occupational Health and Safety unit in writing.

Employees:

- Attending and participating in ergonomics training;
- Applying good ergonomic practices;
- Using proper lifting techniques and equipment; and,
- Reporting ergonomic concerns to their supervisor.

Employees are also responsible for their own personal health and conditioning. Every employee should take steps to reduce their chances of back injury by

addressing the following risk factors: stress, fitness, and posture. Physical conditioning influences lifting ability. Using proper strength and stretching exercises may help reduce the potential for musculoskeletal injury.

D. Training

All employees shall receive information ergonomics related training and learn to apply ergonomic principles at the time of their initial safety orientation. Ergonomic principles incorporated into employee training include, but are not limited to:

- Neutral vs Awkward Postures
- Proper Lifting and the Power Zone
- Allowing Time for Movement and Stretching
- Reducing Excessive Force
- Reducing Excessive Motions
- Minimizing Contact Stress
- Reducing Excessive Vibration
- Eliminating Trip/Slip Hazards
- Providing Adequate Lighting

Any training involving new equipment or new processes will include an ergonomics discussion when appropriate. Supervisors must document all training with the EHSRMS training coordinator. Re-training will be required and documented when employees are observed using poor lifting techniques or not following ergonomic recommendations while using equipment or performing tasks.

E. Procedures

Work area ergonomics will be evaluated at least annually during safety inspections. Work areas should be designed and organized to mitigate potential ergonomic hazards and reduce possible injury. Decisions affecting new equipment purchases and new work procedures will incorporate ergonomic considerations.

Employees will stop work at the first sign of pain or discomfort that may be related to an ergonomic issue (e.g. back injury or repetitive motion strain), notify their supervisor and seek medical attention if necessary. Supervisors will complete an Incident Report see SPPM [2.24](#) and a Supervisor Investigation Report see 2.26.5. The supervisor is encouraged to request an ergonomic evaluation from the EH&S Occupational Health and Safety unit. The safety committee will evaluate and/or investigate all reported ergonomic incidents.

When workplace or procedural improvements are identified by an EHS ergonomics specialists to mitigate ergonomic hazards, the affected employee(s) and supervisor shall respond to the recommendations in a timely manner and in writing with a strategy to mitigate the identified hazards. Recommended actions may include modifying equipment and procedures or obtaining new equipment. Personal protective equipment should only be considered after engineering and administrative controls have been evaluated and determined infeasible.

Current research indicates that back belts should not be used as personal protective equipment (PPE) to prevent back injuries. Back belts have not been proven to be effective in preventing back injuries and are not considered to be personal protective equipment. Therefore, EH&S does not provide, nor encourage the use of, back belts.

Any changes to the work function that require Reasonable Accommodations for medical conditions should be coordinated through HRS.