

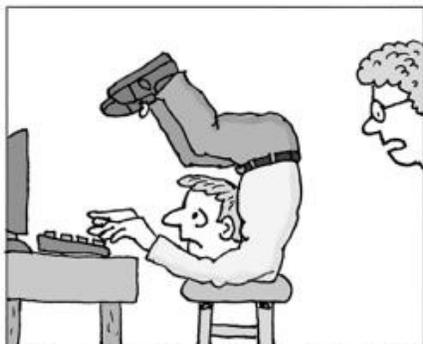
news & notes

EMPLOYEE ERGONOMICS

Employees of a New Hampshire retirement community are just saying no to musculoskeletal injuries from excessive lifting and other repetitive tasks. RiverMead, a continuing care retirement community in Peterborough, New Hampshire, has successfully trained hundreds of employees to understand, identify, and eliminate musculoskeletal risks.

Working with experts from the University of Massachusetts—Lowell (UMass Lowell), 16 RiverMead employees representing every department in the facility attended an original train-the-trainer workshop. Then they shared what they learned with more than 200 coworkers.

The UMass Lowell curriculum used at RiverMead was developed with an Occupational Safety and Health Administration Susan Harwood training grant and through cooperation with MEMIC, the facility's workers' compensation provider.



"Steve, I want to apologize. Apparently that ergonomics consultant was from Cirque du Soleil."



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Elementary ergonomics

Know the principles of how to work safely

The need for a knowledge of effective ergonomics, or fitting the work environment to the worker's needs, is critical across a variety of industries and workplaces, including:

- Retail,
- Poultry processing,
- Meatpacking plants,
- Shipyards,
- Warehouses, *and*
- Foundries.

In addition, nursing homes have one of the highest rates of employee injury and illness and one of the highest rates of musculoskeletal injury of any profession. For example, direct and indirect costs associated with back injuries in the healthcare industry are reported at \$20 billion annually.

The University of Massachusetts—Lowell has developed an ergonomics curriculum built around the following concepts:

- Ergonomics refers to changing the job, not the worker. It is the art and science of fitting the job and the workplace to workers' needs.
- Ergonomics acknowledges the physical limits to being human, including limits to the force that can be sustained, the amount of energy we need to work, the amount of stress we can take, and how many things we can concentrate on at once without getting hurt or sick.
- The amount of pain one feels is often an indication of an ergonomic disorder. Daily pain gradually turns into a musculoskeletal disorder.
- Pain is just one indication of a problem. Other early warning signs include burning, cramping, numbness, swelling, tingling, weakness, or fatigue.
- In order to decide how to change a job so workers don't get hurt, the first step is to find out what about the job is causing the problems.
- Ergonomic hazard analysis is a skill and tool that can help eliminate risk factors and improve worker health and comfort.

These ergonomic principles can apply to every job and every workplace, so consider talking with your supervisor to learn more about how to apply ergonomic tips in your job.

news & notes

OSHA FINES INCREASE

Hidden in the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2015 is Section 701, "Federal Civil Penalties Inflation Adjustment Act Improvements Act of 2015," which requires the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) to increase its civil penalties for the first time since 1990.

Section 701 includes a one-time "catch-up adjustment" that will happen in 2016 with penalties increasing up to a cap of 150 percent. So basically, a penalty now set at \$10,000 could increase to \$25,000. The Agency will adjust—or increase—civil penalties through an interim final rule-making no later than August 1, 2016.

Based on comments by David Michaels, assistant secretary of labor for OSHA, last month before the Committee on Education and the Workforce, Subcommittee on Workforce Protections, you should expect the increase to be capped. Michaels said, "Simply put, OSHA penalties must be increased to provide a real disincentive for employers accepting injuries and worker deaths as a cost of doing business."



Elementary ergonomics quiz

Test what you know

Please select the correct response to the following statements.

1. Ergonomics is the art and science of fitting the worker to the job and the workplace. **True or False**
2. Ergonomics acknowledges the physical limits to being human. **True or False**
3. The amount of pain one feels is often an indication of an ergonomic disorder. **True or False**
4. Early warning signs of an ergonomic disorder include:
 - a. Burning
 - b. Cramping
 - c. Numbness
 - d. All of these
5. Ergonomic hazard analysis is a skill and tool used by accident investigators to find out who to blame for musculoskeletal injuries. **True or False**

ANSWERS

1. False. Ergonomics is the art and science of fitting the job and the workplace to workers' needs. 2. True 3. True. Daily pain gradually turns into a musculoskeletal disorder. 4. d. All of these. Other early warning signs include pain, swelling, tingling, weakness, or fatigue. 5. False. Ergonomic hazard analysis is a skill and tool that can help eliminate risk factors and improve worker health and comfort.

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Best practices in the New Year

Resolve to stay safe in 2016

Arbill Industries Inc., a provider of safety products and services, has developed these best practices to create a safe work environment:

- **Don't take shortcuts.** It's natural to want to get the job finished on or even ahead of schedule. But, the "get-it-done-quick" attitude can be a recipe for disaster. Stick to the instructions and get all your questions answered.
- **Be careful on the road.** Inspect your vehicle, including brake lights, turn signals, tire pressure, and the amount of gas in the tank, before each trip, and get repairs made immediately.
- **Watch the weather.** Both indoor and outdoor work can expose you to extreme temperatures. In cold conditions like those currently gripping many parts of the country, dress in layers and properly cover your head, feet, hands, and face—the body parts most prone to frostbite.
- **Make personal protective equipment (PPE) a priority.** It's not enough to wear PPE. You should also know how to properly use goggles, face protection, gloves, safety shoes, hard hats, and ear protection.
- **Keep things ship shape.** Good housekeeping does more than keep the workplace neat. It can prevent serious incidents like trips and falls, fires, and chemical spills. Fix hazards or report them immediately.