

OFFICE ERGONOMICS

Supplement to Standard Training Module

TRAINING REQUIREMENTS OVERVIEW

This standard Vivid training module provides a general overview of office workplace ergonomics. Although ergonomic programs and employee training are currently not specifically required by OSHA, it is highly recommended that facilities have a detailed site ergonomics program in place where occupational risk factors are present.

In addition to the general overview, employees should receive facility-specific training on ergonomics. This additional training should cover:

- **The company's ergonomic program**
- **Site experience, including history of musculoskeletal disorders**
- **Job-specific training for ergonomic risk prevention, including workstation arrangement and adjustability**
- **Office ergonomic hazards associated with their jobs and tasks**

Additional, in-depth training should be provided for managers, supervisors, engineers, and maintenance personnel involved with program implementation, as well as for employees with significant exposure to occupational risk factors.

The General Duty Clause requires an employer to “provide employment and a place of employment which are free from recognized hazards”. Employee training, appropriate to recognized workplace hazards, is anticipated to be a part of a facility's overall safety and health program.

Frequency: Training ***should*** be provided to affected employees:

- Upon initial assignment of work
- When recognized hazards change, or new hazards are introduced into the workplace
- When new or modified processes, procedures, and/or equipment are introduced into the workplace
- When an employee with an ergonomic injury returns to work
- When the employers' frequency of ergonomic injuries increases

GENERAL OVERVIEW OF OFFICE ERGONOMICS BEST PRACTICES

Currently there is no OSHA standard covering office ergonomic exposures or control methods. A general industry ergonomic standard can be expected in the future, which will likely include office exposures. In the interim, this module is presented as a best practice guideline for office ergonomic program implementation.

WRITTEN PROGRAM: A written program is beneficial to outline the major components of the office ergonomic process, including:

- Management Commitment and Employee Involvement
- Training
- Workstation Evaluation
- Ergonomic Risk Factors – (Prevention and Control)
- Special Needs Equipment
- Medical Management

PURPOSE: To provide effective guidelines to identify and control ergonomic exposures in the office workplace, through effective administrative and engineering means.

1. **SCOPE:** Applies to occupational exposures to office-based ergonomic risk factors.
2. **OBJECTIVES:** Office ergonomic programs should establish goals and objectives for minimizing cumulative trauma occurrences and the existence of ergonomic risk factors in the work place. These goals can be based upon the number of past incidents and worker symptoms in the workplace.
3. **MANAGEMENT COMMITMENT:** Defined responsibilities and accountabilities for participation in the program are crucial to long-term success. A statement of responsibilities is important to communicate how the following will be implemented:
 - Top management commitment to eliminating/minimizing ergonomic risk factors
 - Detailed expectations for participation by management and supervisors
 - Expectations for employee involvement (e.g. ergonomic committees, prompt reporting of signs and symptoms, problem solving task groups etc.)

4. **TRAINING:** Training should be provided, appropriate to an individual's responsibilities and accountabilities:

Office Employees -

- The company ergonomic policy
- Types of cumulative trauma disorders (CTDs)
- Risk factors that cause or contribute to CTDs, including:
 - Forceful exertion
 - Awkward postures
 - Local contact / Mechanical stressors
 - Repetition
 - Static Loading
 - Lack of periodic rest breaks
- Recognition and reporting of signs and symptoms
- Personal techniques to prevent CTDs
- Workstation evaluation to identify and eliminate ergonomic risk factors

Management and Supervisors

- Anthropometry
 - Workstation design and arrangement
 - Equipment adjustability
 - Alternative / special needs equipment
5. **WORKSTATION ANALYSIS:** Ongoing workstation observations and evaluations provide the means to identify office ergonomic risk factors before they become problematic. Tools to assist include:
- Initial analysis of past injuries, symptoms, and medical cases to identify actual incident trends
 - Baseline surveys of employees to identify work positions that contain actual or perceived ergonomic risk factors, and may lead to ergonomic injuries
 - Periodic ergonomic surveys to identify previously unrecognized risk factors or unintended results from implemented control measures
 - Employee Feedback and follow-up reports on implemented control measures and occupational symptoms experienced
6. **RISK FACTOR CONTROL:** Identifies the methods used by the employer to eliminate or minimize ergonomic risk factors through:

Engineering Controls -

- Workstation design and layout

- Selection of equipment

Work Practice Controls -

- Design of job methods and motions
- Training for new hire, transfer, and return-to-work employees

Administrative Controls -

- Rest breaks
- Job rotation
- Job standards

7. MEDICAL MANAGEMENT: The employer should have a defined system for medical management of cumulative trauma injuries, including:

- Identified, knowledgeable healthcare providers, familiar with occupational injuries, especially those caused by repetitive motion
- Implementation of an effective return to work procedure
- Baseline and periodic health surveillance evaluations

REFERENCE MATERIALS

Websites

<http://www.osha.gov/ergonomics/index.html> Federal OSHA website page providing technical links, frequently asked questions, ergonomic tools etc.

http://www.osha.gov/SLTC/computerworkstations_ecat/index.html Federal OSHA website page specifically dealing with Computer workstations design and arrangement and adjustability factors.

http://www.osha.gov/SLTC/computerworkstations_ecat/adtnl_matrls.html Federal OSHA website page that provides links to other organization's and websites for additional information.