



Ergonomics on the job site

Construction is a very physically demanding job that can be rough on your joints and muscles. Workers are at risk of musculoskeletal disorders such as rotator cuff injuries, strains, carpal tunnel syndrome and tendinitis. These types of injuries can cause temporary or permanent disability. Giving your body the proper care can make all the difference when it comes to injury risk and the ability to continue working.

Musculoskeletal disorders are caused by actions that put stress on the body. Common examples of problematic actions include:

- Repetitive motions
- Using vibrating equipment
- Working in awkward positions
- Over-reaching
- Lifting or carrying heavy items

Luckily, there are many tools, materials and exercises that can decrease your risk of musculoskeletal disorders. The idea behind ergonomics is fitting the job to the employee versus fitting the employee to the job. To make an ergonomics program successful, employees must work together with management to find comfortable, viable options for their workspace.

Behavior: A large part of keeping your muscles and joints safe is proper behavior. Focus on your movements throughout the day to ensure you're not inducing unnecessary strain.

- If items are heavier than feels comfortable, find a partner or use equipment to help lighten the load.
- Always lift with your legs instead of your back by bending your knees and keeping your chest up.
- When picking up, putting down or carrying items, keep the load tight to your body.
- If you need to change direction while carrying items, turn your entire body instead of twisting at the waist.
- Push rolling equipment such as dollies and carts instead of pulling.

Tools and equipment: Your tools and work surface should be comfortable and stable.

- Select tools with an ergonomically friendly handle and hold them correctly.
- Don't apply more force than is necessary when using a tool.
- Raise ground level work to a table or work bench whenever possible.
- If ground level work cannot be raised, look for a tool with an extension handle that will allow you to stand while working.
- Look for reduced vibration power tools and anti-vibration gloves.

No two people are built exactly the same so it's important to make sure that your work set up isn't harming your body. Work with your supervisor to make sure that your tools and workstation are comfortable for you. Always stretch before starting work and use proper body positions throughout the day to stay safe.



Discussion questions

1. What are some examples of musculoskeletal disorders?
2. What are some common examples of problematic actions?
3. Where should you hold items when picking up, putting down or carrying a load?
4. Is it better to push or pull rolling equipment?
5. What are some tips to improve ground level work?

Answers

1. Musculoskeletal disorders include rotator cuff injuries, strains, carpal tunnel syndrome and tendinitis.
2. Problematic actions include repetitive motions, using vibrating equipment, working in awkward positions, over-reaching and lifting or carrying heavy items.
3. When picking up, putting down or carrying items, keep the load tight to your body.
4. It's better to push rolling equipment versus pulling it.
5. Raise ground level work to a table or work bench whenever possible and/or look for tools with an extension handle that will allow you to stand.

Meeting notes:

Employee comments/concerns:

Other safety issues to be addressed on the job/facility:

Training record:

Date: _____ Job site/facility: _____
Trainer: _____ Title: _____

Employee name
(print) / (signature)

Employee name
(print) / (signature)
