New resources can help employers fight back against MSIs

Musculoskeletal injuries (MSIs) continue to top the list of the most frequent claims in the BC construction industry. The good news is that new BCCSA resources can help employers turn the tide of MSIs.

In 2023:

- Overexertion was one of the top three injury claims, impacting 1,547 workers in 795 companies, and represented 26.5% of total claims. Young workers aged 25 to 34 reported the highest occurrence.
- Repetitive strain injuries (RSIs) resulted in 223 worker claims at 168 companies and represented 3.8% of total claims.
- More than 75% of overexertion and RSI claims involved the wrist, fingers, hand, back, elbow, and shoulder.

"WorkSafeBC requires employers to eliminate, or if that is not practicable, to minimize the risk of MSIs to workers," says Suzanne Jackson, a BCCSA Regional Safety Advisor (RSA). "To assist, the BCCSA has developed an MSI prevention manual and interactive power point to promote injury prevention and compliance."

The BCCSA also offers ***26 trade-specific resources*** for residential, institutional-commercial, and industrial jobs.

Some ergonomics principles incorporated in these resources include:

- Reducing material handling by using mechanical lifting aids, positioning materials and equipment close to the work, and using carts, dollies, and wheelbarrows. When manual lifting is necessary, workers should be trained to lift.
- Reducing awkward postures by devising tasks to minimize working below knee height or above shoulder height.
- Reducing grip force through the use of tools that are more ergonomic and using tools in a way that does not result in over-gripping. This is especially important for vibrating (power) tools.
- Incorporating administrative planning to help make work easier, whether through material placement, task rotation, housekeeping, lighting or walkway use.

"While ergonomic interventions can reduce over-exertion, construction work remains a physically demanding job," Jackson says. "As 'industrial athletes', construction workers should be encouraged to warm up their bodies before beginning work. The BCCSA has recently developed 10 warm-up exercises that can be performed on the jobsite."

If you're looking for help, Regional Safety Advisors are available to assist employers for free.