

# Feb. 29, 2016 Is International RSI Awareness Day



Monday, Feb. 29, 2016 is the 17<sup>th</sup> International Repetitive Strain Injury (RSI) Awareness Day, which is intentionally celebrated on the only non-repetitive day on the calendar. RSIs, also called musculoskeletal injuries or disorders (MSIs or MSDs), typically affect tendons, muscles, nerves and joints, often in the neck, shoulders and upper back; hips, knees and feet; elbows, forearms and hands.

This day is so important because these kinds of injuries are among the most common workplace injuries. For example, in Ontario alone, more than 40% of all lost-time injuries allowed by the WSIB are RSIs or MSIs, the single largest class of compensation claims in the province.

And beyond the social, emotional and economic costs to affected individuals are the economic costs to society in general, estimated at more than \$26 billion dollars annually.

RSIs/MSIs can be caused by:

- Infrequent breaks
- Exposure to excessive vibrations
- Improper lifting techniques
- Poor posture while working.

To protect workers from developing RSIs and to comply with the requirements in the OHS laws to address ergonomics-related hazards, which are often the source of these injuries, take these four steps:

**Step #1:** Identify and assess ergonomics-related hazards, such as those posed by pushing and pulling materials or equipment.

**Step #2:** Take steps to eliminate the identified hazards, such as by lowering shelves, raising seats or making other adjustments to work stations.

**Step #3:** Implement safe work procedures for activities likely to cause RSIs, such as manual materials handling.

**Step #4:** Train workers on how to protect themselves from RSIs, such as by using

safe lifting techniques.

OHS Insider's Ergonomics Compliance Centre has many resources that you can use to raise awareness of RSIs and protect workers from developing these injuries, including:

- 5 mistakes to avoid in managing your ergonomics program
- Steps workers can take to help address ergonomics-related hazards
- Preventing MSIs in office spaces
- A case study on a textile plant in Ontario that saved almost \$300,000 from its ergonomics program
- Seven strategies to ensure that your ergonomics program is successful.

And here are just some of the many model forms, checklists, policies, etc. you can download, adapt and use in your own workplace:

- 10 commandments of ergonomics
- Ergonomics-related injury records review form
- Model Ergonomics Policy
- Pushing/Pulling Risk Assessment Form
- Lifting Hazard Assessment Checklist
- Office Ergonomics Risk Factor Checklist
- Manual Handling Checklist
- Model Worker MSI Symptom Survey
- Ergonomic Risk Factor Checklist
- Checklist for Evaluating Ergonomics Programs.