

# Improving your Ergonomic Program



Most workplaces do a better job of recognizing and addressing health & safety hazards and tend to deal with “ergonomics” or musculoskeletal hazards (MSDs) completely separately, or not at all, even though in many cases their highest injury rates are related to muscle strains. An effective and sustainable Ergonomic Program is essential to effectively managing and reducing the risk of workplace MSD related injuries.

In many cases, ergonomic policies and procedures can be incorporated into an organization’s Safety Program without having to recreate a separate program. For example, during Workplace Inspections, ensure MSD related hazards are identified alongside safety-related hazards, include MSD hazards in your hazard reporting and accident investigation processes, and include office ergonomic education in worker orientation training.

Taking a proactive approach can help reduce unnecessary injuries and their related costs, reduce production downtime, in addition to decreasing job demands, making them appropriate for a larger percentage of the workforce.

The Ministry of Labour has been reinforcing the need for musculoskeletal disorder (MSD) hazards to be better addressed through various Blitzes and an increase in orders for ergonomics processes, training and MSD assessments. The announced 2019-2020 Ministry of Labour (MOL) initiatives include a focus on preventing musculoskeletal disorders in the Construction, Health Care, Industry, Mining, and Municipality sectors.

Ministry Inspectors typically assess hazards related to awkward postures, heavy and /or awkward lifting, forceful exertions and repetitive work tasks. If a particular type of task has resulted in worker injury across a Sector, it will most likely be the focus of their review when they visit your site. Be prepared, conduct Ergonomic Hazard Assessments of these tasks, not only to comply with ergonomic standards but to demonstrate that ergonomics is a priority in your workplace.

2019 also brought further expansion and improvement to Ontario’s MSD Prevention Guidelines. The Ministry of Labour may refer to this Guideline when assessing workplaces and writing orders, therefore understanding this Guidelines’ recommendations is essential. This MSD Guideline can be accessed online at a new website that provides a great reference source for both small employers looking

to create a new Ergonomics Program and for larger employers looking to improve their existing Program. The MSD Prevention Guidelines provide a “Basic Guideline” which includes a 10-step process on how to develop a comprehensive and effective Ergonomics Program.

A fresh year provides a great time to reflect on your existing Ergonomic Program and to set ergonomic goals for 2020. Should you need further assistance with Ergonomic Risk Assessments, program development, or employee training, a qualified Canadian Certified Professional Ergonomist (CCPE) can provide expertise to assist you in making a real difference in your workplace.

Using the information provided in Ontario’s MSD Guideline, ERGO Inc. has created a simple Ergonomic Audit to assist you with evaluating your existing Ergonomics Program and to determine where opportunities for improvement may exist.

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