

International RSI Awareness Day Is Back on Feb. 28, 2015



The 16th International Repetitive Strain Injury (RSI) Awareness Day is Feb. 28, 2015 (although it's officially celebrated on Feb. 29th, the only non-repetitive day on the calendar). RSIs, also called musculoskeletal injuries or disorders (MSIs or MSDs), are injuries that affect tendons, muscles, nerves and joints, often in the neck, upper and lower back, chest, shoulders, arms and hands.

The goal of this day is to raise awareness of RSIs, MSIs and MSDs, which is especially important for workers. Why? Because they're one of the most common types of workplace injuries.

RSIs can be caused by:

- Infrequent breaks
- Exposure to excessive vibrations
- Improper lifting techniques
- Poor posture while working (watch this animated guide on good posture in offices).

In addition to reducing workplace injuries, safety professionals should be interested in eliminating RSIs because the OHS laws require employers to take steps to address ergonomics-related hazards, which are often the source of these injuries. To do so, 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
- A Spot the Safety Violation on pushing materials.

And here are just a few of the many model tools, including forms, checklists and policies available for you to download, adapt and use in your own workplace:

- Pushing/Pulling Risk Assessment Form
- Lifting Hazard Assessment Checklist
- Office Ergonomics Risk Factor Checklist
- Manual Handling Checklist
- Ergonomic Risk Factor Checklist
- Checklist for Evaluating Ergonomics Programs
- Form for Investigating Neck, Shoulder and Upper Back Injuries
- Form for Investigating Injuries to the Hips, Knees and Feet
- Form for Investigating Elbow, Forearm and Hand Injuries.