

**“Ergo Nightmare”
STARTING A GRASS ROOTS ERGONOMICS PROGRAM
... and Beyond**

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Prior to OSHA’s issuance of the new ergonomics standard, American Ref-Fuel devised and implemented an ergonomics program. In doing this, we accomplished two major goals:

1. We protected our employees from cumulative and repetitive work related injuries.
2. We saved money.

It is interesting to note that cumulative and repetitive work related injuries could cost a company \$20,000 to \$150,000 for just one incident. Our employees are able to work productively and safely, due to our safety programs, which includes ergonomics. The key ingredients to a grass roots ergonomics program are described herein.

After identifying an Ergonomics Team, we agreed that our program would be most effective if we were to incorporate three components: Educate, Entertain, and Make it Memorable. With this in mind, we did our own homemade video on office ergonomics using our employees and a lot of inside jokes, which, while keeping focused on education, also entertained and made the training memorable.

The education started with the basics. What is ergonomics and what are CTD’s, MSD’s and RMI’s? Ergonomics is the science of workstation design to make the workstation fit the user - vs. making the user fit the workstation.

CTD = Cumulative trauma disorder
MSD = Musculoskeletal disorder
RMI = Repetitive motion injury

There are several basic elements of ergonomics programs, which companies can adopt in one form or another. These program elements are described below:

1. Management Support

Management will need to understand the importance of an ergonomics program and the benefits:

- Ergonomics programs protect the workers, and
- Saves the company money in health insurance and workers compensation claims, as well as prevention of lost time incidents, and
- Enhances job satisfaction and performance

2. Determine a needs and cost list for management's approval for budgeting the costs
3. Implement program with (a) training, (b) evaluations (c) recommendations/solutions

STARTING THE PROGRAM

Training can consist of video training, and hands-on workstation evaluations. Identify an **ERGONOMICS TEAM**, which may consist of safety personnel and high-risk users or members of the Health, Safety & Environmental Committee. It is extremely beneficial to have a member of senior management sponsor the team.

1. Identify the high-risk users
2. Distribute self assessment surveys
3. Conduct evaluations, make recommendations and offer solutions
4. Periodically monitor workstations
5. Provide ongoing training

Begin with an assessment survey. Identify high risk users. Perform an evaluation at every workstation, starting with the high risk users or anyone who is experiencing pain or discomfort.

Workstation set up:

1. The top of the monitor screen should be at eye level or below.
2. The distance to monitor from eyes should be approximately an arm's length.
3. Copy holders should be at the same angle as the monitor screen and close to it.
4. The upper arm should be vertical – at approximately a 90-degree angle.
5. The lower arm Lower arm to be horizontal or angled slightly downward.
6. Wrists should be in neutral position or at a slight negative position.
7. Any external mouse should be at the same level as the keyboard.
8. Keyboard and mouse should have a wrist rest; to rest on, not lean on.
9. Small of back should be supported with lumbar support.
10. Thighs should be fully supported.
11. Chair height should be so the feet are touching the floor or resting on a footrest.
12. Phones should be accessible without awkward reaching and should not be cradled.
13. Eliminate potential awkward positions.