CHAPTER 10
ERGONOMICS

A. REFERENCES

SPPM 2.74 Ergonomics
https://policies.wsu.edu/prf/index/manuals/safety-policies-procedures-manual/sppm-2-74/
SPPM 2.24 Accident Injury Report Form
https://policies.wsu.edu/prf/index/manuals/safety-policies-procedures-manual/sppm-2-24/
SPPM 2.26 Supervisor Investigation Report
https://policies.wsu.edu/prf/index/manuals/safety-policies-procedures-manual/sppm-2-26/
Chapter 12 – General Materials Handling and Storage

B. PURPOSE and SCOPE

Sprains and strains are among WSU's most common workplace injuries. This chapter supports the systematic reduction and elimination of workplace ergonomic hazards through early identification and mitigation. Hazard mitigation includes the following:

- Establishing clear responsibilities for identifying, evaluating and eliminating ergonomic hazards;
- Training employees to recognize ergonomic hazards and apply ergonomic principles;
- Encouraging preventative strategies; and,
- Instituting procedures sustaining the systematic identification, reduction and elimination of workplace ergonomic hazards.

C. RESPONSIBILITIES

Directors are responsible for incorporating ergonomic equipment fees/expenses, such as ergonomic chairs, materials handling equipment and computer desks into departmental budgets and funding requests.

Supervisors are responsible for the following:

- Identifying ergonomic concerns;
- Providing or arranging for ergonomic assessments/training; and,

To assist with identifying potential ergonomic hazards, supervisors and employees are encouraged to request an ergonomic evaluation from EHS in writing.

Employees are responsible for the following:

- Attending and participating in ergonomics training;
- Applying good ergonomic practices;
- Using proper lifting techniques and equipment; and,
- Reporting ergonomic concerns to their supervisor.

Employees are also responsible for their own personal health and conditioning. Every employee shall take steps to reduce their chances of back injury by addressing the following risk factors: stress, fitness, and posture. Physical conditioning influences lifting ability. Using proper strength and stretching exercises may help reduce the potential for musculoskeletal injury.

D. TRAINING

All employees shall receive ergonomics related information and learn to apply ergonomic principles at the time of their initial safety orientation. Ergonomic principles incorporated into employee training include, but are not limited to:

- Neutral vs Awkward Postures
- Proper Lifting and the Power Zone
- Allowing Time for Movement and Stretching
- Reducing Excessive Force
- Reducing Excessive Motions
- Minimizing Contact Stress
- Reducing Excessive Vibration
- Eliminating Trip/Slip Hazards
- Providing Adequate Lighting

Any training involving new equipment or new processes will include an ergonomics discussion when appropriate. Supervisors must document all training via the WSU employee Learning Management System (aka Percipio). Re-training will be required and documented when employees are observed using poor lifting techniques or not following ergonomic recommendations while using equipment or performing tasks.

E. PROCEDURES

Work area ergonomics will be evaluated at least annually during safety inspections. Work areas must be designed and organized to mitigate potential ergonomic hazards and reduce possible injury. Decisions affecting new equipment purchases and new work procedures will incorporate ergonomic considerations.

Employees will stop work at the first sign of pain or discomfort that may be related to an ergonomic issue (e.g. back injury or repetitive motion strain), notify their supervisor and seek medical attention if necessary. Supervisors will complete an Incident Report see SPPM 2.24 and a Supervisor Investigation Report see 2.26.5. The supervisor is encouraged to request an ergonomic evaluation from EHS. EHS and/or the safety committee will evaluate and/or investigate all reported ergonomic incidents.

When workplace or procedural improvements are identified by EHS to mitigate ergonomic hazards, the affected employee(s) and supervisor shall respond to the recommendations in a timely manner and in writing with a strategy to mitigate the identified hazards. Recommended actions may include modifying equipment and procedures or obtaining new equipment. Personal protective equipment may only be considered after engineering and administrative controls have been evaluated and determined infeasible.

Current research indicates that back belts shall not be used as personal protective equipment (PPE) to prevent back injuries. Back belts have not been proven to be effective in preventing back injuries and are not considered to be personal protective equipment. Therefore, EH&S does not provide, nor encourage the use of, back belts.

Any changes to the work function that require Reasonable Accommodations for medical conditions must be coordinated through WSU-HRS.