



# *Making* **Ergonomics** Work



**WSIB**  
ONTARIO  
**CSPAAT**

Workplace Safety &  
Insurance Board

Commission de la sécurité  
professionnelle et de l'assurance  
contre les accidents du travail

## *Goals*

### *Good ergonomic practices will help to*

- prevent or reduce the number and/or extent of workplace injuries
- prevent or reduce injury recurrences
- facilitate safe return to work

### *It's a "risky" business...*

Ergonomists look for signs in the workplace that point to potential accidents or injuries. Some of these "risk factors" may be removed, while others may be minimized to prevent recurrences or aggravation of existing injuries. Some of the most common risk factors our ergonomists see include:

- Non-adjustable workstations
- Materials stored in very high or low locations, increasing reaching and bending movements
- Insufficient variation of duties or break times from repetitive tasks

# **Ergonomics is the applied science** of adapting work and/or workstations to workers

## *Definition*

Ergonomics is the applied science of adapting work and/or workstations to workers.

## *WSIB ergonomists can help*

### **Ergonomists can**

- provide general ergonomic information to help workplaces avoid injuries
- conduct worksite assessments to evaluate job suitability for workers with injuries, to ensure a safe return to work
- assist with difficult matches between physical work demands and employee abilities
- recommend job and/or workstation modifications that work for employers and employees
- help workplace parties become more self-reliant in all ergonomic matters

## *Frequently asked questions*

### ***1. What are the benefits of good ergonomic practices?***

Effective workplace ergonomics programs help

- reduce the risk of workplace injuries
- reduce the severity of injuries that do occur
- reduce absenteeism
- improve employee morale
- improve productivity

### ***2. What information should be included in a job description or physical demands analysis?***

- Document each job task in detail
- Describe the work routine, tools or equipment handled, using jargon-free language
- Provide specific data such as weights handled, reaching and carrying distances, temperature ranges and vibration levels
- List production rates and interactions or dependencies on others

### ***3. What factors might an ergonomist consider when determining job suitability?***

- How is the workload organized?
- How are rest periods scheduled?
- Is production machine-paced or self-paced?
- How much muscular effort is required, and for how long?



- Does the work involve soft tissue compression? (pressure points from tools)
- Are there any extremes of temperature, especially cold?
- Are tools appropriate and well maintained?
- Is the worker exposed to vibration?
- Are there any awkward positions related to actions such as extended reaching or overhead work?

#### ***4. What types of recommendations does an ergonomist make?***

Depending on individual circumstances and requirements, recommendations could be as simple as changing the order of a given set of tasks, to providing assistive devices such as adjustable work surfaces. The ergonomist tries to suggest a range of technically and financially practical options.

#### ***5. What are the most common work related injuries?***

Most workplace injuries involve backs, shoulders and necks. Poor lifting techniques, workstation setup and work process design can contribute to musculoskeletal injuries. Consistent application of good ergonomic practices will help to reduce, minimize or eliminate these injuries.

## *Access to ergonomists*

Workplace parties - employers and/or workers - may consult independent ergonomists by contacting the following organizations:

- Safe Workplace Associations
- Association of Canadian Ergonomists
- Job Accommodation Network
- Occupational Health Clinic for Ontario Workers
- National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health

There are many other agencies and service providers specializing in ergonomics.

## *An alternative –*

Not all workplaces will be able to find ergonomic services readily available or nearby. The ergonomists at the WSIB are available throughout Ontario to assist workplaces.

## *For more information*

*please contact us:*

**Call (416) 344-1000 in Toronto,  
or toll free at 1-800-387-8638  
or visit the WSIB website at  
[www.wsib.on.ca](http://www.wsib.on.ca)**