

Introduction Eric Stager, Administrator, Industrial Hygiene Practice Speciality

As the Administrator of the Industrial Hygiene Practice Specialty, I would like to welcome all of you to the inaugural issue of the Ergonomics Branch newsletter. It is a great pleasure to see that this branch has finally come to fruition. The discussions for this branch have been in the council on Practices and Standards for several years and until the IHPS took the lead, it seemed that this would never happen. I am very excited and energized for both

the branch and the great things that I know will come from it. If you have not already done so, please contact your branch leadership, Dick Hofman, chair, Jeremy Chingo-Harris, vice chair, or Cindy Roth, newsletter editor to assist them in making this the best branch of the "bunch".

There are many exciting opportunities to both serve and be served in this branch and the IHPS looks forward to supporting it all.

We would like to dedicate this issue to Kevin P. Granata and all of the other victims of the Virginia Tech massacre.



SAFETY 2007

We look forward to seeing you at the ASSE Safety 2007, June 25-27 in Orlando, Florida. The following ergonomics related sessions may be of interest to you.

505: Intro to Lean Principles for Ergonomists and Engineers in the Healthcare Industry

530: When the Rubber Hits the Road: Lessons from Goodyear's Global Ergo Programs

554: Visual Ergonomics in the Workplace

604: Soft Tissue Injuries: Questions Every Manager should ask to Get to the Heart of the Issues.

644: Biomechanics for Risk Managers: Slip, Trip, and Fall Injuries

705: Development of An Ergo Surveillance Tool

726: The Boston Globe's Best in Class Ergo Program

758: Ergonomics Risk Assessment: Maximizing the Value of a Physical Demands Analysis

764: Ergo Update: Why are Women at Greater Risk

784: Macroergonomics - A Systems Approach to Safety Excellence

For more information, please visit <http://www.asse.org>.

The Importance of Applied Ergonomics to Any Business

When companies talk about increasing productivity and quality; where there is labor dissatisfaction; when you are looking at reducing lost work time, workers' compensation costs and alike, the management of any company considers these things to be built in and the "cost of doing business". They create budgets to cover the increases in costs associated, such as increases in insurance premiums, larger corporate funds if they are self-insured and legal fees as examples. However, these are manageable costs, ones we can control, yet we continue to spend money on redo work, recalls, disability claims, workers' compensation claims' and we watch in public companies, the fall of stock prices. Outsourcing has become a commonality with increasingly more jobs going off shore based on the cost of doing business in the United States. How do we stop the flow and create greater profitability for the companies to which we consult?

Almost all injuries and illnesses in any workplace are preventable. When the work does not exceed the human capabilities and we design work methodologies, tools, and equipment with the human limitations in mind, we provide injury prevention for our workforces.

Ergon Nomos: the correct definition is Work Law, however when translated for application it is "fitting the task to the person." In the US, our workers' compensation claims have reached \$54 billion dollars. Some of the issues that cause people to become injured have varied over the years. The most common ergonomic risk factors are Force, Repetition, Contact stress, Personal factors and the Environment.

Very few have taken into consideration aging as a risk. The workers' comp claims associated with the aging workforce are more expensive and require more time for the employee (patient) to rehab and return to work so aging must now be included as an ergonomic risk factor.

As we age, it becomes more difficult to perform the same tasks we performed when we were younger. Our strengths diminish but not our job requirements, our joints become a little more achy, but the tasks still do not change and we continue to reach, bend, lift, carry, work on computers and do all of the things we need to do to continue working. How do these responses affect our "at work" performance? How can we assist our employees in feeling good while being injury free and still productive? How can we reduce soaring lost work time and workers' compensation claims for all of our workers?

The answer is of course ERGONOMICS. By evaluating our workplaces and making the necessary changes to the jobs that do not exceed employee capabilities, we can continue to employ older workers, women and anyone capable of doing the job. Our costs are dramatically reduced because when we talk about workers' compensation or disability claims, we are not considering the indirect costs which might be 4 to 11 times the direct costs based on the type of industry.

Kickstart Your Companies Ergonomics Program with a Pilot

To realize the actual benefits of an ergonomics process, there must be some capital investment on the part of the company. The investment might be long- or short-term purchases, for example tool or manual material handling equipment, and staff and management time (training, wages). This is how you can effect “change” and reduce costs.

A pilot project is the first step for a company in a business unit or on a line that has recurring workers’ compensation or production and quality issues. The criteria must be established by the internal organization. The first step is to audit the pre-identified department and do a walkthrough, talking to employees, watching the jobs and taking notes. Then evaluate the OSHA 300 logs and safety performance records, JSAs and medical records. The correlation of the tools will establish the jobs with the highest ergonomic risk potential and these are the jobs that should be more formally assessed. When using an assessment tool, ensure it includes body parts, right and left sides, description of the job, time of day of most injuries, and other pertinent data. Use this same tool after the tasks have changed and employees have been retrained. Now you will know the Return on Investment for your ergonomics improvements.

To sell an ergonomics pilot project up through management, ask one very strategic question. How many widgets do we have to sell, or how many beds do we have to keep filled or how many cases do we have to deliver, or how many of our business products do we have to sell to cover our workers’ compensation claims? That should get someone’s attention.

Ergo News

NEW NIOSH ERGONOMICS BOOKLET

NIOSH has published a 68-page booklet entitled Ergonomics Guidelines for Manual Materials Handling. This booklet is written for managers and supervisors in industries that involve the manual handling of containers. It offers suggestions to improve the handling of rectangular, square, and cylindrical containers, sacks, and bags.

To download DHHS (NIOSH) Publication No. 2007-131 (April 2007) in PDF, visit <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/docs/2007-131>

CTD NEWS OFFERS TWO FREE ISSUES

Every month, CTDNews — Workplace Solutions for Repetitive Stress Injuries brings you the latest ergonomics tips and solutions to improve the safety of your workplace, prevent employee injuries and keep your workers' compensation costs in check. Concise, easy-to-read articles provide strategies you can put to work immediately in your organization.

Visit <http://www.ctdnews.com/> to receive your free issues and learn more about this publication.

Ergonomics at Hallmark Cards

Like most manufacturers in the United States, Hallmark Cards has its share of ergonomic hazards – manual lifting, order selecting, filling machines with stock, awkward postures, etc. Headquartered in Kansas City, Missouri we have manufacturing plants, distribution centers and subsidiaries scattered throughout the Midwest and a few other regions. Each facility has its own identity and culture, and addresses ergonomics in its own fashion – some more effectively than others.

Hallmark's major efforts regarding ergonomics ramped up in the late 1990's. We had a great deal of internal training and a focus on establishing ergonomic teams at each facility. Since that time, we have brought in outside consultants to evaluate various operations and provide additional training to the ergo teams and facility management. Since ergonomic injuries represent approximately half of our total injuries, it is always a focus at our facilities and subsidiaries.

A key principle in being an effective safety and health professional is getting out of your cubicle and interacting with people on the floor. You are only as successful as the relationships you develop with the people you're charged with protecting (in conjunction with management) because a major responsibility of the job is praising people for doing things safely to ensure the behavior continues and changing behavior when they're doing things unsafely. Whose opinion do you respect more – some stranger with a job title and a bunch of letters behind their name or someone you have a relationship with and respect?

The success of doing an ergonomic assessment and coming up with solutions to difficult problems is greatly dependent on the relationship with the individual. At Hallmark, we try to promote open and honest dialogue about working conditions and the majority of our employees, especially the more senior employees, are not at all hesitant to offer their opinion. Therefore, we work very hard with employees to come up with solutions that work for them, and eliminate or reduce the ergonomic hazards. This not only results in a reduction in our OSHA log figures and workers' compensation costs, but is a way to show employees you actively care for their safety and well-being, and involve them in the safety process. The resulting increases in productivity and quality are just icing on the cake.

Are we where we want to be with ergonomics? No, but most facilities have active ergonomic teams working with their peers to develop solutions to difficult problems. The benefits of a strong ergonomics program translate to a better safety program because if you actively care for the way people work with regards to ergonomics, it translates directly to the other elements of your safety program.

Call for Papers

Don't forget to submit your Ergonomics related materials to the IHPS for submission support for Las Vegas 2008 by 7/15/07 to Jeff Nesbitt at nesbitt.jeff@mayo.edu