

Organizations Act on Ergonomics

Occupational Safety and Health Administration

July 1998

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National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) released its review of more than 2,000 studies on work-related musculoskeletal disorders, with an in-depth analysis of 600 epidemiologic studies. Peer-reviewed by 27 experts, the NIOSH study found, "A substantial body of credible epidemiologic research provides strong evidence of an association between MSDs and certain work-related physical factors where there are high levels of exposure and especially in combination with exposure to more than one physical factor..."

August 1997

The General Accounting Office issued Worker Protection: Private Sector Ergonomics Programs Yield Positive Results. This case-study report examined ergonomics programs at five facilities and found that, "Controls did not typically require significant investment or resources and did not drastically change the job or operation" yet "facilities could also show reductions in overall injuries and illnesses as well as in the number of days injured employees were out of work..." All five experienced lower workers' compensation costs after establishing ergonomics programs. "Facility officials also reported improved worker morale, productivity, and product quality..."

September 1997

The American College of Occupational Environmental Medicine (ACOEM), representing 7,000 physicians, called on Labor Day for employers and employees to take steps to prevent cumulative trauma disorders ranging from carpal tunnel syndrome and tendinitis to lower back strain. ACOEM provided a checklist for employers and employees to use to identify problems and reduce risks.

October 1997

The National Advisory Committee on Occupational Safety and Health urged OSHA to devote additional resources to ergonomics for outreach, education and training, and compliance.

November 1997

The American Public Health Association (APHA) adopted a resolution urging OSHA to develop a standard to prevent work-related musculoskeletal disorders in light of APHA's finding that "measures are available that can prevent these disorders and there is adequate scientific data to take public health action..."

March 1998

The American National Standards Institute (ANSI) released for public comment a draft voluntary consensus standard identifying steps employers can take to prevent work-related musculoskeletal disorders in jobs across all industries. Developed by a diverse committee of labor,

management, academics and others, the ANSI draft emphasizes both prevention and prompt treatment of symptoms to forestall serious disability.