

Welcome to the Hard Hat Training Series!



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Welcome to the Hard Hat Training Series. Today we will be talking about construction and industrial ergonomics. This training will provide you with the knowledge needed to help you understand what ergonomics is, how it affects you on the job, and what steps you can take to apply safe ergonomic practices at work.



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When you hear the word “ergonomics,” you might think of lifting heavy objects; in truth, ergonomics is much more than that. Ergonomics is about studying your physical abilities and limitations to observe how you can best perform work tasks using various tools, equipment, and materials in your job environment. The ultimate goal of ergonomics is to find a good fit between you and the conditions you work in.



Did You Know?

The Greek root “ergon” means work. “Nomoi” means natural laws, and “ics” means in characteristic of. Together, “ergonomics” means “in characteristic of work and natural laws.”



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Every job you will ever do has ergonomic hazards. Consider this true story about a warehouse employee:

Carly's job was to scan and load items into a rack very quickly. Her supervisors expected her to perform this task within no more than 11 seconds per item. If she didn't meet that rate, she would be written up and eventually fired.



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As you can imagine, some of the items she handled were very heavy. After working in the warehouse for a few months, Carly began to experience a sharp stabbing pain in the middle of her back. Determined to not get written up, she decided to work through the pain. However, during one shift she threw out her back.



No longer capable of lifting heavy things, Carly had to quit her job at the warehouse. As time went on, Carly's back showed minimal improvement. She continued to experience pain and difficulty doing basic things. To make matters worse, she struggled to find another job she could perform with her chronic back pain.





Carly's story is not unique. Too often, employers and employees alike fail to deal with ergonomic hazards in the workplace, leading to musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs). Whether you work on a construction site, in a warehouse, or at any other industrial facility, you need to understand the ergonomic risks so you can perform your job safely.



Ergonomics seems like a small thing, but neglecting safe practices can lead to you developing work-related musculoskeletal disorders (WMSDs). Take a moment to look at these statistics and facts about the severity of ergonomic injuries.



This training is designed to help you work more comfortably and efficiently at your job. There are various ergonomics hazards you may face depending on the type of work you do, so we divided this training into categories of job tasks, including floor and ground level work; overhead work; lifting, holding, and handling materials; and hand-intensive work.



Standards

OSHA used to have a specific standard for ergonomics, but it was repealed in 2001. This is because there are so many different scenarios in any given workplace that it is hard to cover them all. The following slide will cover some publications that deal with ergonomics.





GUIDELINES

OSHA Publication No. 97-117 Elements of Ergonomics Programs
NIOSH Publication No. 2007-122: Simple Solutions: Ergonomics for Construction Workers
ISO 11226:2000 Evaluation of Static Working Postures
ISO 11228-1:2003 Manual Handling – Part 1: Lifting and Carrying
ISO 11228-2:2007 Manual Handling – Part 2: Pushing and Pulling
ISO 11228-3:2007 Manual Handling – Part 3: Handling of Low Loads at High Frequency

These are some of the main guidelines concerning ergonomics safety. Many states have additional guidelines, as do some industries. We have provided these as a guide, but it's your responsibility to know all federal, local, and company rules that apply to your job site.



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Why Training?

No matter the situation, it is common to hear workers and even employers ask, “Where does it state we need to be trained?” Can’t a worker also be deemed “qualified” based on experience? The answer is “no.” Experience helps, yes, but regulations are very clear that employees must be trained (no matter how long they’ve been on the job) and that it is the employer who is responsible for overseeing that safety training, ensuring employees have the understanding, knowledge, and skills needed to operate safely.



Initial training and refresher training, as well as any written and practical evaluations, must be documented and filed. At the very least, in the case of an investigation, OSHA will want to see proof of proper and consistent training (in the way of training outlines, class lists, training goals, tests, certificates, and so on). These documents should include the name of the person who taught the class or conducted the evaluation.



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WORKERS MUST RECEIVE REFRESHER TRAINING WHEN...

1. There are changes in their assigned duties.

2. There are changes regarding potential exposure to hazards, for which the employee has not received training.

3. If any deficiency has been noted in an employee's work performance that is related to the safety and health of themselves or other workers.

4. If an accident has occurred, or anytime an employee is injured or nearly injured during operations.

Note: In some areas, refresher training is required at least every three years (if not sooner).

Training is not just a one-and-done occurrence; it is on-going. In fact, similar to the guidelines set down for when initial training is required, OSHA is also specific when it comes to "refresher training." More specifically, OSHA acknowledges the need for "refresher" or "follow up" training whenever there is a demonstrated need for it. Listed here are some common instances when retraining is required. Can you think of any others?





The extent of training will be determined by the employer, but at the very least it should include classroom instruction followed by a written and practical examination that prove continued competency.



The following section will cover some general information about ergonomics, including definitions and the ergonomics plan. After that, we will look at the MSDs associated with floor and ground level work and how to control potential hazards.





Next, we will cover the hazards and controls associated with overhead work; lifting, loading, and handling materials; and hand-intensive work. Our goal is to provide you with a general overview of all the ergonomics hazards you may face on the job.



General

SAMPLE



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