

14. Ergonomics Program

(ûr gâ-nõm tks) *n.* an applied science concerned with the characteristics of people that need to be considered in designing things that they use in order that people and things will interact most effectively and safely called also **human engineering, human factors engineering, biotechnology.**

Overview

This section discusses the following topics:

- Management Leadership and Employee Participation
- Job Hazard Analysis and Controls
- Training Overview
- Musculoskeletal Disorders Management

FairPoint Communications, Inc. developed the Ergonomics Program to inform all employees about its commitment to improving employee comfort and well-being on the job by identifying and correcting ergonomic risk factors.

The goal of the program is to prevent work-related Musculoskeletal Disorders (MSD) by controlling or eliminating the risk factors that cause them. The program ensures all affected employees are aware of job-related factors and provides information and solutions to alleviate them. FairPoint Communications, Inc. promotes continuous improvement in the efficiency, comfort, and well-being of all employees through a team effort of management and employee involvement.

The current program is based on current recommendations, proposals, and various state-implemented policies set forth by the Occupational Safety & Health Administration (OSHA).

References

There are no documents referenced in this section.

Management Leadership and Employee Participation

Management leadership and employee participation are critical to a successful ergonomics program. The commitment from management shows employees the importance of ergonomics in the workplace. Employee participation is important in the Ergonomics Program because the program's effectiveness depends on employees reporting musculoskeletal disorders and MSD hazards.

Safety Committee is charged with supporting the ergonomics program.

Job Hazard Analysis and Controls

Job hazard analysis and controls reduce or eliminate the job factors contributing to an MSD. Job hazard analysis determines if work-related job factors are present that may cause or contribute to an MSD. Job factors are evaluated to assess their contribution to the MSD or symptom. If necessary, controls are developed and implemented to reduce or eliminate the relevant job factors.

The following is discussed as it relates to job hazard analysis and controls:

- Hazard Awareness
- Work Methods
- Identifying Problem Jobs

Hazard Awareness

Constant awareness of and respect for ergonomic hazards and compliance with all safety rules are considered conditions of employment.

Through hazard awareness and early reporting of signs and symptoms of MSDs, employees are more likely to receive help before serious damage occurs. Early reporting of MSDs and MSD hazards also helps avoid the development of MSD signs or symptoms in other employees doing the same job.

Work Methods

Work methods are designed to reduce or eliminate when possible:

- Chronic muscle contraction or steady, excessive force
- Extreme or awkward finger/hand/arm/shoulder positions
- Excessive gripping, pinching, pressing, or twisting with finger, hands, or wrists
- Tool vibration

Training on ergonomic principles and proper work methods is provided to new employees. Employees are held accountable for utilizing proper work practices. Supervisors monitor the work methods daily and report suspected problems to the Safety Committee. Job rotation may be used to alleviate physical fatigue and particular muscle/tendon stress when possible.

Identifying Problem Jobs

There are several methods FairPoint Communications, Inc. uses to identify problem jobs that are most likely to result in ergonomic disorders. Risk Management initially reviews and periodically monitors injury and illness records to identify potential harmful patterns.

When problem jobs are identified, they are evaluated for the following risk factors:

- Rate and number of repetitions: This refers to the performance of the same motion or motion patterns every few seconds for more than two hours at a time.
- Postures and limb positions: This refers to fixed awkward work postures such as overhead work, twisted or bent back, bent wrist, stooping or squatting for more than a total of two hours.
- Vibration: This refers to the use of vibrating or impact tools or equipment for more than a total of two hours.
- Loads/lifted: This refers to the lifting, lowering, or carrying of anything weighing more than 25 pounds more than once during a work shift.

- Loads/static: This refers to holding a fixed or awkward position with arms or neck for more than ten seconds.
- Muscle forces: This refers to continually pulling or pushing objects.
- Work pace: This refers to piece rate or machine-paced work for more than four hours at a time.

Training Overview

Training provides employees, supervisors, and persons involved in administering the Ergonomics Program the knowledge and skills necessary to recognize and control MSDs and MSD hazards. Training enables employees to address workplace MSD hazards, identify aspects of job tasks that may increase an employee's risk of developing MSDs, recognize the signs and symptoms of these disorders, and participate in the development and execution of effective strategies to prevent and control them.

The Company trains employees who work at jobs with exposure to specific risk factors and employees in jobs with work-related musculoskeletal disorders. The training program provides training to all employees.

The training includes either general or job-specific training based upon an employee's position or tasks performed.

Training Elements

The following ergonomic elements are taught to all employees:

- How to recognize workplace risk factors associated with work-related musculoskeletal disorders and the methods to reduce exposure to those risk factors
- Signs and symptoms of work-related musculoskeletal disorders, the importance of early reporting, and medical management procedures
- Reporting procedures and the person to whom the employee is to report workplace risk factors and work-related musculoskeletal disorders
- How to address and control workplace risk factors

- How to ensure each employee understands his or her role in the process
- How each employee can participate in the process
- Opportunities to practice and demonstrate proper use of implemented control measures and safe work methods that apply to the job
- Awareness of and respect for ergonomic hazards
- Basic ergonomic principles, body mechanics, and hazard recognition
- Safe lifting techniques and back injury prevention
- Compliance with all safety rules
- Required personal protective equipment for working in certain areas
- Maintenance of personal protective equipment

Each employee involved in job analysis is trained on job analysis methods used to identify workplace risk factors and the evaluation and implementation of control measures.

Musculoskeletal Disorders Management

Musculoskeletal Disorders (MSD) Management is essential to reduce the severity of work-related MSDs. FairPoint Communications, Inc. is committed to ensuring employees report signs and symptoms of work-related MSDs early.

MSD management ensures employees:

- Report signs and symptoms of work-related MSDs early
- Receive appropriate care for effective evaluation, management, and follow up of a work-related MSD
- May be provided appropriate temporary work restrictions during the recovery period

FairPoint Communications, Inc. provides the following information to the healthcare professional:

- Description of employee's job and information about the MSD hazard

- Description of available work restrictions likely to fit the employee's capabilities during the recovery period

FairPoint Communications, Inc. retains records that include information provided to the physician and a copy of the physician's written opinion.