

UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA FAIRBANKS

ENVIRONMENTAL, HEALTH, SAFETY AND RISK MANAGEMENT SAFETY SYSTEM POLICY AND PROCEDURE

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SUBJECT: Ergonomics

ERGONOMICS

PURPOSE: Describe University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF) commitment and plan to address ergonomics and the prevention of work-related musculoskeletal disorders (MSD).

OBJECTIVE: To as large a degree as possible adapts the job and the workplace to the employee over time by designing tasks within the employee's capabilities and limitations. This will lead to the reduction of MSDs and will in turn improve productivity, reduce fatigue and absences, and reduce workers' compensation costs.

SCOPE: Applies and pertains to all University of Alaska Fairbanks departments.

I. PROGRAM:

This written program is part of the overall safety and occupational health program and applies to all work operations, both in laboratories and office areas at the University of Alaska Fairbanks.

This program provides for a series of specific actions to be implemented through a period of time, with the ultimate goal of integrating ergonomics into day-to-day business. The process promotes continuous improvement in the efficiency, comfort, and well being of all employees through a team effort of management and employee involvement.

Currently, there is no specific Occupational Health and Safety Administration standard regarding ergonomics in the workplace. However, the legal basis for conducting an ergonomic assessment is found within OSHA's General Duty Clause, Section 5. Sec. 5(a) states "each employer (1) shall furnish to each of his employees employment and a place of employment which are free from recognized hazards that are causing or are likely to cause death or serious physical harm to his employees; (2) shall comply with occupational safety and health standards promulgated under this Act.

SPECIFIC ELEMENTS OF THE PROGRAM:

1. Management, supervisors, and employee training.
2. Educational ergonomics information made available via the World Wide Web.
3. Self-audit checklists available to all employees.
4. Workstation analysis to review every action trigger or potential action trigger on site.
5. Workstation improvements as indicated by screenings.
6. A reporting system clearly made known to all employees.
7. Tracking of MSDs and a monitoring system by UAF Environmental, Health, Safety, and Risk Management (EHS&RM) department.

PROGRAM RESPONSIBILITIES:

Environmental, Health, Safety, and Risk Management office

1. Promotes the Ergonomic Policy.
2. EHS&RM will work with departments to identify potential risk factors associated with computer workstations.
3. EHS&RM will conduct a workstation analysis upon request for each affected employees and make recommendations to the department head for needed changes.
4. Serves as a resource for managers to implement their own Ergonomics Programs; and serves as a liaison to resolve ergonomic issues.
5. The ergonomics specialist at EHS&RM will determine the approved list of ergonomics equipment.
6. The ergonomics specialist at EHS&RM will work closely with the purchasing department to ensure the purchase of ergonomics equipment.
7. Revises the Ergonomics Policy as necessary to meet future needs and regulatory changes.

UAF Management

1. Management should be involved in all stages of identifying, assessing, and controlling ergonomics hazards.
2. Managers and supervisors should work closely with the EHS&RM department and affected employees to determine hazards.
3. Management should make available to all employees training in ergonomic awareness and safe work practices. This training is key in ultimately reducing injuries and illnesses, and involving employees in this training will improve the interest and quality of the training
4. Managers should provide individual work site evaluation/observation (specific fit to specific use).
5. Management should provide reasonable equipment that meets user's needs.
6. Managers must provide reasonable accommodations for disabled employees as required by the American Disabilities Act.
7. Management should keep documentation of training including nature of training, employees' names and signatures, dates of training, length of training, and the instructor's name.

Creating a "Safety Culture":

1. Managers should encourage employees to implement and use proper working techniques and equipment.
2. Managers should encourage employees to report signs and symptoms for proper medical treatment.
3. Managers should encourage stress reduction; examples include:
 1. In office areas: non-computer related tasks; desk side exercises
 2. In non-office areas: job rotation
 3. In all areas: stress management classes and a regular exercise routine to improve cardiovascular health and tone muscle groups to avoid falling victim to MSDs.

UAF Employees:

1. Participate in ergonomic training provided by their department managers.
2. Notify management of their reasonable needs to improve their working environment.
3. Be responsible for correct use of the equipment provided by the employer.
4. Promote a "safety culture" by using proper working techniques.
5. Cooperate with management to identify symptoms of ergonomic concern and report these for correctional action.

CORRECTIVE ACTIONS:

When concerns/problems are identified, EHS&RM may recommend any of the following corrections:

1. Changes in work practice techniques;
2. Modifications to the existing workstation (an effort will always be made to work with existing equipment); and/or
3. Purchase of ergonomic equipment (e.g. wrist rests, track balls, lumbar support, chairs, etc.)

EHS&RM along with assistance from the area Supervisors will determine the surface and root causes of all hazards (ergonomic and general) related to a task being analyzed. The following control strategies will be used to reduce or eliminate those hazards:

1. **Engineering controls.** These may include workstation redesign, tool and handle redesign, and change of work methods. The goal is to make the job fit the person.
2. **Work practice controls.** This may include proper work techniques, new employee conditioning, and monitoring and modifications as necessary to reduce ergonomic stressors.
3. **Administrative controls.** These controls will be designed to reduce the duration, frequency, and severity of exposure to ergonomic stress. These controls may include job rotation, reduction of repetitions, and preventative maintenance of related equipment.

4. **Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).** PPE may be used if appropriate. However, in all cases, if employees are not properly trained, or are reluctant to accept change, reducing ergonomic injuries and illnesses may be difficult at best.

The department head/supervisor will be responsible for working with their Dean/Director to implement recommended corrections.