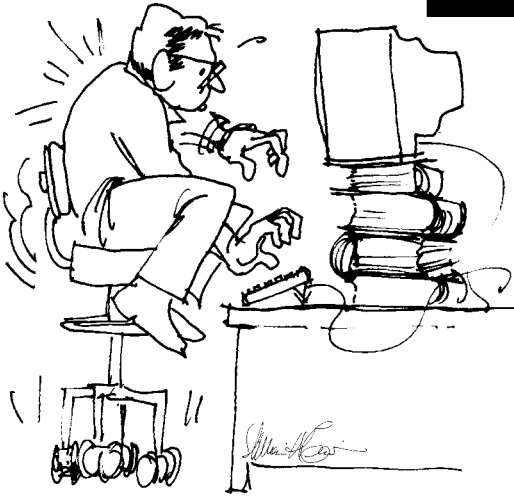


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Is your office **Ergonomically Correct?**

Do you need a step stool to get on your chair? Is your desk a door sitting on filing cabinets? Is your keyboard sitting on your lap? If you answered yes to any of these questions, chances are your office is not ergonomically correct, and these are just a few of the conditions that affect the ergonomics in your work place.

Ergonomics as defined by OSHA (Occupational Safety & Health Administration) is "the science of fitting the job to the worker." OSHA has proposed an Ergonomics Program Standard, which they hope to have in place by the end of this year. Without going into detail about the program, the proposed standard is designed to reduce the number of work-related musculoskeletal disorders (WMSDs), which include neck, arm, back, and leg pain, carpal tunnel syndrome, and tendonitis. WMSDs result from sitting/standing in awkward positions, heavy lifting/pushing and repetitive motions. OSHA believes that by adopting an Ergonomics Program

Standard most WMSDs can be prevented. Under OSHA's proposed standard, along with fixing any ergonomic problems in their work places, an employer would have to pay lost wages and benefits to workers if they are found to have injuries due to poor ergonomics in their work place. However, employers would not be required to make their work places ergonomically correct until an actual work related injury occurs at their place of business.

Many employers believe it is cost prohibitive to transform their of-

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ices into being ergonomically correct when it really is not. There has been a great deal of focus on ergonomics by manufacturers with many inexpensive products now available on the market. The key to correct ergonomics is adjustability and flexibility. Today, there are numerous simple and inexpensive changes that can be made to workstations to make them ergonomically correct. Although ergonomics applies to many situations, computer workstations are among one of the most frequently used work areas.

The "one size fits all" approach taken by most offices, is detrimental to the ideas behind ergonomics. For instance, just because a certain chair works for one person, it doesn't mean it will work for another. Simply by having adjustable height work surfaces, chairs, and keyboards workers can obtain the most comfortable position. There are hundreds of chairs with various back, seat, and height adjustments that will help make any work place a more comfortable one. Simply by having adjustable chairs that allow a user to change positions easily, is one step towards good ergonomics. Another simple way of making a workstation ergonomically correct is to position the computer monitor at eye level directly in front of the user, no more than an arm's length reach away. The products available on the market are endless, there is not a situation that cannot be corrected ergonomically.

Along with making your work environment more comfortable, having correct ergonomics in your work place could reduce a company's worker compensation costs as well as increase the productivity and the quality of work delivered. OSHA's proposed standard is one way of making sure that millions of American workers will be protected.

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