

What is Ergonomics?

Ergonomics has to do with designing and arranging workplaces, products, and systems to suit the people interacting with them. One of the main goals of ergonomics is to minimize the risk of injury or harm.

Benefits of Ergonomics

There are five proven benefits of having a strong workplace ergonomics process:

1. Cost Reduction

Musculoskeletal (soft tissue) disorders (MSDs) and injuries are a common and costly category of workplace injuries. Reducing ergonomic risks and indirect costs associated with MSDs is an opportunity for significant cost savings.

2. Improved Productivity

When a work environment is designed with ergonomic solutions that allow for good posture, less exertion, fewer motions, and improved heights and reaches; workplaces become more efficient and productivity improves.

3. Improved Quality

In order to produce quality products — avoiding worker frustration and fatigue is key. If a job is too physically taxing for workers, it may not get done the way it was intended and compromise the quality of the product.

4. Improved Employee Engagement

Reducing employee fatigue and discomfort on the job can result in a lower rate of turnover and absenteeism as well as improved morale and employee engagement.

5. Improving Safety Culture

A company committed to ergonomics also shows that it values the health and safety of its workers. The overarching result of achieving the four prior benefits of ergonomics is improving company safety culture. Creating and fostering this health and safety culture will ultimately lead to better performance of the company as a whole, starting with the health and safety of each

Preventative Measures

Stretching

- ✘ Stretch before you start working and during short breaks (at least once per hour), and after breaks and lunch to avoid fatigue
- ✘ Stretch to warm up muscles and increase flexibility/elasticity to improve mental alertness and reduce fatigue, tension, and stress. Also, it's important to stretch if tension or stress is apparent after a lengthy task duration or an extended awkward posture.

Use Mechanical Lift Assists and Carts

- ✘ Avoid manually handling objects more than 35lbs
- ✘ Avoid carrying objects more than 100 feet

Practice Proper Cart Handling

- ✘ Push instead of pulling; Use both hands when pushing
- ✘ Stand directly behind the cart when pushing (avoid twisting your body)
- ✘ Maintain good control and limit speed; ensure cart is not overloaded

Use Proper Lifting Techniques when Lifting

- ✘ Bend knees and look forward to keep back straight when lifting a load
- ✘ Position the load close to the body and maintain a firm grip; Use smooth, controlled movements and keep arms in front of body; Turn feet in the direction of movement to avoid twisting

Repetition

- ✘ Use power tools when available
- ✘ Avoid pressure on palms, wrists, and elbows
- ✘ Change your position or take breaks from repetitive tasks and follow job rotation policies where applicable to alternate muscle groups between successive tasks

Tool Box Talk

How To Use This Resource

When accidents and incidents happen on the jobsite, we are always quick to point the finger at lack of training, not following practices or procedures, or even improper supervision. The idea that the hazards and dangers associated with the job were not properly communicated to all of the workers is often missed.

Tool Box Talks can go by many names, and although formats may vary, these meetings all serve one purpose: to inform employees and contract workers. Tool Box Talks are short, informal, meetings between management and the workers on a jobsite. The goal of these meetings is to reinforce current safe job procedures, inform workers of new and/or relevant procedures, review recent safety violations/incidents, and ensure workers are up-to-date on the information required to complete their work safely.

Always use a Tool Box Talk form to record the meeting topic, date, who was in attendance, and any follow-up actions to be taken. Not only do these forms help with consistency of record keeping, but they also ensure that nothing is missed. At the end of the meeting have management sign off on the form.

One of the most important aspects of a Tool Box Talk is giving workers an opportunity to voice their concerns and ask questions. All employees have a right to participate in health and safety as it relates to their work and it is the supervisor or manager's responsibility to create an environment for them to do so. Once the meeting is over, and the form is filled out, it should be filed with other documented Tool Box Talks. Remember that Tool Box Talks are short and informal, they are not meant to be intimidating. Use the opportunity to have fun and stay on top of what is necessary to keep safety culture a strong part of the business.



For a full listing of Tool Box Talk topics, visit: www.scsaonline.ca/resources/tool-box-talks

For a copy of the Tool Box Talk form, visit: www.scsaonline.ca/pdf/Tool_Box_Meeting.pdf

ABOUT THE SASKATCHEWAN CONSTRUCTION SAFETY ASSOCIATION

The Saskatchewan Construction Safety Association (SCSA) is an industry-funded, membership-based, non-profit organization that provides cost-effective, accessible safety training and advice to employers and employees in the construction industry throughout the province to reduce the human and financial losses associated with injuries. Registered March 20, 1995, the SCSA is, and has been since inception, committed to injury prevention. Serving almost 10,000 member companies with business offices in both Regina and Saskatoon, the major business units of the association are Advisory Services, Business Development, Corporate Services, Program Services and Training. The mission of the SCSA is constructing safety leadership in Saskatchewan and the vision is to create the safest construction environment in Canada.