

MARION COUNTY SAFETY MANUAL ANNEX K – ERGONOMICS

Overview

The term ergonomics may be an unfamiliar term for many employees. Ergonomics is defined as the science of designing the job, equipment and workplace to fit the worker. Proper ergonomic design is necessary, especially in office work, to prevent repetitive strain injuries. These injuries can develop over time and lead to long-term disabilities.

Congress voted to repeal the Ergonomics Standard a few years ago, but musculoskeletal disorders and repetitive motion injuries will continue to be an issue. These injuries are most common in clerical and office workplace settings. These employees should be counseled by their department head or supervisor on the proper techniques required to complete their jobs that will help reduce the likelihood of causing a repetitive motion injury.

Preventative Measures

The following checklist will aid supervisors and employees in evaluating workspaces for proper ergonomics:

Are the following steps taken to prevent eyestrain:

- No lighting glare or reflections on computer monitors
- Light reflected away from the operator's eyes
- Non-reflective video display terminal (VDT) screens or screen covers
- Neither operator nor terminal are facing a window
- Brightness and contrast controls used
- Take breaks from using the computer to conduct other tasks
- Annual eye exams for operators

Are the following steps taken to avoid neck and back pain:

- Swivel and/or detachable keyboard
- Screen 12 to 18 inches from operator's face
- Top of screen and document holder no higher than eye level
- Keyboard set for easy reach with hand and forearm straight and parallel to the floor, upper arm at right angle to forearm
- Sturdy, comfortable chair with more than one seating position
- Chair backrest adjusts to support lower back
- Chair height adjustable, so user's feet rest on floor or footrest
- Seating position with back against chair, shoulders straight, feet on the floor
- Room for paperwork on top of workspace and room for legs beneath.

Are the following steps taken to avoid stress:

- VDT areas soundproof
- Alternate VDT work with other tasks
- Muscle loosening exercises

Are the following steps taken to prevent musculoskeletal disorders:

- Wrists straight when working
- No heavy jewelry on wrists
- Occasional breaks to stretch and shake out wrists and fingers
- Employees report any pain, numbness or swelling