

## OCCUPATIONAL ERGONOMICS

### I. REFERENCES

- A. California Code of Regulations, Title 8, General Industry Safety Orders §5110. Repetitive Motion Injuries

### II. POLICY

Ergonomics is defined as fitting the workplace to the worker and examining the interaction between the worker and his or her environment. Applying ergonomic principles can help reduce the risk of injuries or illnesses for those who work with computers, in laboratories, in jobs that require repetitive activities, or in heavy materials handling.

It is the University's policy to reduce or eliminate hazards that contribute to the development of cumulative trauma disorders (CTD)--a class of disorders that are caused, precipitated, or aggravated by repetitive motions. The primary tools of UCSC's program are worksite evaluations, employee and supervisor training, and implementation of ergonomic control strategies. Ergonomics should not be seen as a one-time effort; it is a continuous, on-going approach for optimizing the work environment.

### III. PROCEDURES

#### A. Reporting

Employees experiencing any CTD symptoms and/or back pain resulting from work tasks should report the problem to their supervisor as soon as possible. Early intervention is essential to the quick recovery and long-term prevention of CTD's. CTD's usually develop gradually. Symptoms such as pain, numbness, and tingling in the upper extremities are often ignored until the condition becomes chronic or permanent injury occurs. Supervisors and/or employees experiencing CTD symptoms are advised to contact Insurance and Risk Management to schedule an ergonomic evaluation.

#### B. Employee Education

Employee awareness training has been shown to successfully reduce the risk of CTD problems. Upon request, EH&S provides training classes on Ergonomics and Ergonomics for Tool Users.

### C. Ergonomic Workplace Evaluation

The evaluation consists of the employee workstation, tasks, and work practices. Workstation assessments include work tools (chair, keyboard, mouse, telephone); work postures of particularly the arms, hands, and spine; and identification of ergonomic risk factors: repetition rates, forceful exertions, awkward postures, localized mechanical stresses, lighting, vibration and temperature extremes. Evaluations may be scheduled through EH&S.

## IV. RESPONSIBILITIES

### A. Managers

Managers and supervisors play a leading role in reducing cumulative trauma disorders in the workplace. Managers at all organizational levels are encouraged to implement strategies to control cumulative trauma disorders. Measures to take include:

1. Learning about CTD causes and control options.
2. Providing resources (as available) to implement ergonomic solutions.
3. Performing or requesting periodic risk assessments to identify ergonomic hazards.
4. Purchasing furniture that has maximum adjustment flexibility and complies with standards established by the American National Standards Institute (ANSI).
5. Restructuring job tasks to reduce risk factors which contribute to CTD's.
6. Encouraging supervisors to implement steps to control CTD's in the workplace.
7. Providing training to supervisors and employees.

### B. Supervisors

Supervisors are required to provide employees with appropriate ergonomics training through EH&S, private vendors or other appropriate means, reinforcement of ergonomic practices, assistance, and evaluations (where appropriate). There are several ways this can be accomplished:

1. Promote a safe and healthy work environment.
2. Maintain an awareness of CTD risks.
3. Evaluate the work environment for proper ergonomic practices and conditions.
4. Provide proper workstations and assistive devices.
5. Develop procedures to respond to employee concerns about CTD problems.
6. Promptly report all employee injuries and/or employee complaints regarding cumulative trauma disorder symptoms.
7. When necessary, seek assistance from EH&S.
8. Provide adequate recovery time by allowing employees engaged in highly repetitive tasks an opportunity for frequent, short, alternative work activities and breaks.
9. Integrate ergonomics into total department safety management.

C. Employees

Employees are encouraged to promptly report ergonomic problems to their supervisors. Prompt implementation of workplace changes can significantly reduce the potential for severe injuries or illnesses. It is recommended that employees:

1. Adjust and use their workstation and equipment as outlined on the Computer Workstation Design web page, <http://ehs.ucsc.edu/safety/ergo/vdt.html>
2. Follow safe work practices.
3. Make effective use of recovery periods.
4. Perform simple exercises and stretches as recommended by the evaluator.
5. Follow ergonomic recommendations.
6. Report work-related injuries to their supervisor.

D. Environment, Health and Safety Office

1. Coordinate the ergonomics program to reduce cumulative trauma injuries at UCSC.
2. Provide guidance on modifying the workplace to minimize the potential for injuries and illnesses.
3. Provide ergonomics training for employees, supervisors, and managers.
4. Evaluate individual and departmental workstations.
5. Provide assistance and advice on the selection of ergonomically sound furniture and equipment.

E. Risk Management: Workers' Compensation

When an employee experiences a work-related injury or illness, Risk Management initiates workers' compensation procedures. The program objective is to bring about an expedient recovery and return to productive work. Risk Management notifies EH&S of any new CTD injuries.

F. Vocational Rehabilitation

The UCSC Vocational Rehabilitation Program serves faculty and staff who have job related injuries. The available range of services includes workstation assessments, job performance and accommodations analysis, counseling and job retraining.

G. Purchasing Department

The Purchasing department can provide assistance on the purchase of equipment through the University's preferred equipment provider and provide information on purchasing policies.