

Ergonomics

OVERVIEW

Ergonomics is the science and practice of designing tasks and workplaces to accommodate human capabilities and limitations.

The ergonomic process involves evaluating equipment, tools, tasks, and work environments to identify and control physical risk factors that can lead to musculoskeletal disorders and computer vision syndrome.

Physical risk factors include:

- Repetitive motions
- Awkward and static postures
- High hand forces
- Mechanical/contact stress
- Vibration
- Stress to the visual system
- Manual material handling (lifting, lowering, pushing and pulling)

Physical risk factors can be controlled by applying ergonomic principles when designing, modifying and/or adjusting equipment, tools, tasks, and the work environment to fit the employee.

Ergonomic principles apply to office, laboratory, industrial, agricultural, and all other work environments.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy and procedure is to:

- Prevent musculoskeletal disorders and computer vision syndrome.
- Ensure early intervention once a musculoskeletal disorder or computer vision syndrome has been reported.

ERGONOMIC EVALUATIONS

Environmental Health and Safety (EH&S) is available to conduct ergonomic evaluations when:

- New work spaces are designed.
- Requested by an employee's supervisor.
- Requested by an employee.
- Significant changes occur in equipment, tools, and/or tasks.
- An employee reports symptoms consistent with musculoskeletal disorders and/or computer vision syndrome.

Contact the campus EH&S office to schedule an ergonomic evaluation. See [EH&S](#) for contact information.

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ERGONOMIC TRAINING

Environmental Health and Safety offers training classes in the following areas:

- Computer workstation ergonomics (offices)
- Manual material handling (lifting, lower, pushing and pulling)
- Laboratory ergonomics
- Custodial ergonomics
- Other topics upon request

NOTE: Training classes vary by campus. Contact EH&S for information on what is offered at specific locations (see [EH&S](#)).

REPORTING MUSCULOSKELETAL DISORDERS AND COMPUTER VISION SYNDROME

Musculoskeletal disorders are soft-tissue injuries to muscles, tendons, ligaments, cartilage, blood vessels and nerves. Symptoms might include chronic discomfort, fatigue, pain, swelling, stiffness, burning, numbness, tingling, and limited range of motion of the fingers, hands, wrists, elbows, knees, neck, and back.

Computer vision syndrome is a collection of symptoms associated with viewing a computer monitor for prolonged periods of time. Symptoms might include burning, itchy, watery or dry eyes; eyestrain/blurred vision; headaches, and neck and backaches.

Employees

Employees experiencing symptoms consistent with musculoskeletal disorders and/or computer vision syndrome are:

- To report the symptoms to their immediate supervisor.
- Encouraged to contact EH&S for an ergonomic evaluation.

Supervisors

Supervisors, upon notification of potential musculoskeletal disorders and/or computer vision syndrome, are:

- To complete an Incident Report (see *SPPM 2.24*).
- Encouraged to contact EH&S to schedule an ergonomic evaluation.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Contact the following departments for additional ergonomic information and assistance.

EH&S

The EH&S publication *Office Ergonomics—Adjusting Your Environment* contains steps to assist employees in setting-up their computer workstations. This publication and other ergonomic related information are available at the EH&S Ergonomics website at:

ehs.wsu.edu/workplace-safety/ergonomics/

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EH&S (cont.)

Environmental Health and Safety personnel at each of the four campuses is available to perform ergonomic evaluations and training sessions.

For evaluation and training assistance, contact:

- WSU Pullman EH&S; telephone 509-335-3041
- WSU Spokane EH&S Coordinator; telephone 509-358-7621
- WSU Tri-Cities EH&S Coordinator; telephone 509-372-7163
- WSU Vancouver EH&S Coordinator; telephone 360-546-9706

University Stores

For ergonomic chair trial and acquisition on the Pullman campus, contact University Stores; telephone 509-335-4592.