



E-NEWSLETTER







JANUARY 2012

## FEATURE ARTICLE

### Ergonomics for the Aging Workforce

Statistics show that the average age at most workplaces is increasing. Without proper ergonomic strategies an aging workforce can lead to increased injury rates, lost time and costs associated with claims.

The first step is to understand how our body is affected by the aging process. Specifically, employers should understand how the aging process impacts a person's ability to do work. Aging results in:

-  Strength decreases
-  Flexibility decreases
-  Vision declines or is altered
-  Manual dexterity decreases
-  Reduction in reaction time and speed
-  Fatigue increases as does the time to fatigue

These changes in the body increase an individual's risk to develop a Musculoskeletal Disorder (MSD). As workers remain in the workforce later in life, ergonomic accommodations become even more important to reduce the risk of experiencing MSDs.

Ergonomic changes can be divided into two main categories: engineering and administrative. Engineering controls focus on changes to workstations, equipment and tools. Administrative controls, on the other hand, include implementing programs, training, job rotation, strength and conditioning programs.

Although there is no one solution to fix a task, there are ergonomic strategies that will help determine where mismatches between the aging workforce's capabilities and the physical requirements of the job are. Conducting Physical Demands Analyses of jobs and identifying gaps between worker abilities and job demands is an important step.

The most important thing to remember is that although some of your ergonomic changes may be driven by managing the challenges associated with your aging population, these changes will also have a positive impact on your younger workforce. Improvements such as workstation or tool design and/or implementing a job rotation will help ensure your entire workforce has reduced risk of injury.

## UPCOMING ERGO SEMINARS & EVENTS FOR 2012

### CERTIFICATE WORKSHOPS

#### **Completing Physical Demands Assessments (PDAs)**

May 15, 2012 – Kitchener, ON

#### **Office Ergonomics – Preventing MSDs in the Office**

May 16, 2012 – Kitchener, ON

#### *Ergonomics and Musculoskeletal Disorder (MSD) Assessments in HEALTHCARE, EDUCATION and MANUFACTURING*


May 17-18, 2012 – Kitchener, ON

REGISTER TODAY – Space is limited.

Visit [www.ergoconsulting.ca](http://www.ergoconsulting.ca) or call 705.436.4504 for further information or to register.

### SPEAKING EVENTS

#### **Partners in Prevention – May 1, 2012, International Centre, Mississauga, Ontario**

-  Marnie Downey will be co-presenting a session entitled "Ergonomics from the Case Files"

**Interested in more information about where you can see ERGO Inc. Consultants at upcoming conferences and speaking engagements?**

Visit our calendar on the ERGO Inc. website for up to date information <http://www.ergoconsulting.ca/about/calendar-of-events/>

## JOB SUITABILITY TO ASSIST WITH RETURN TO WORK INITIATIVES

Navigating a successful Return to Work of an injured employee can be a challenging process. Some difficulties may include:

- ✘ Pre-Injury job is not suitable based on the employee's restrictions
- ✘ Employee not wanting to come back
- ✘ Refusal of proposed job
- ✘ Functional information is not clear or no rehabilitation progress is being made

One document that can assist you with this process is called an **Ergonomic Job Suitability Report**. This assessment determines whether the physical capabilities of the employee, as outlined by a Physician or Physiotherapist, are a match for the offered job. If the job is deemed not suitable, accommodation strategies are outlined. This assessment can reduce lost time and assist with WSIB decisions. Contact ERGO Inc. for additional information on how we can help.

## ERGO FEATURED VIDEO

### The Ergonomics of Snow Shoveling



Click on the picture above to be taken to a brief video on safe shoveling practices.

The winter weather is finally upon us! When shoveling snow this season, make sure that you use the best ergonomic work methods possible.

Some basic tips for safer shoveling include:

- ✘ Shovel early and often.
- ✘ Take your time, snow shoveling almost always occurs at an inconvenient time and, as a result we are in a hurry to finish, increasing our injury risk.
- ✘ Wear proper clothing that allows for mobility and breathability.
- ✘ Choose a snow shovel that is light weight and with a relatively small blade.
- ✘ If possible, push the snow rather than lift it.
- ✘ If you must throw it avoid twisting the back.
- ✘ Do not lift too much at one time.

## ERGO VIDEO PAGE

As part of our new website, ERGO Inc. will be posting ergonomic and safety and health videos that you may find useful including proper workstation set up, ergonomic equipment and general health.

If you have a video that you think might be beneficial for others please feel share it with us.

To view our current videos, please visit the Resource Centre section of our website and click on link marked 'Videos' or click [here](#).



Evaluating Risks in Growing Occupations Inc.

PROFESSIONAL ERGONOMIC AND INJURY  
MANAGEMENT SERVICES

HEAD OFFICE:

tel: 436-4504 fax: 705-436-4619

email: [downey@ergoconsulting.ca](mailto:downey@ergoconsulting.ca)

[www.ergoconsulting.ca](http://www.ergoconsulting.ca)