

MSD Prevention

An Update on Ontario's Musculoskeletal Disorder (MSD) Prevention Guideline

Musculoskeletal Disorders (MSDs) are the number one type of work-related lost-time claims in Ontario. MSDs are strongly linked to known workplace hazards and therefore, can be prevented. Ergonomic strategies, both administrative and engineering, have been researched and validated as the best way to reduce workplace MSD risk.

The MSD Prevention Guideline and the Resource Manual are now available for employers in Ontario. These resource documents provide employers with comprehensive guidance on establishing, implementing and maintaining a successful MSD prevention process as part of their Occupational Health and Safety Program.

A key message in the Guideline is that “controlling MSD hazards in a workplace is not only the right thing to do; it is the law”. The Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA) requires employers to ensure that workers are aware of the hazards associated with a worker's job, and that controls are implemented to reduce the risk of injury from these hazards.

Section 1-3 of the Guideline discusses MSD prevention as part of an organization's Health & Safety Program and how to establish a foundation for success. Management is expected to support and participate in the MSD prevention process. The process and supporting policies should be widely shared throughout the company. Workers should be encouraged to come forth with reports of early signs and symptom of MSDs so that action can be taken early to minimize or eliminate the MSD hazards.

The Guideline recommends that MSD Prevention Training be provided for all workers. All employees should know the signs and symptoms of MSDs and how to recognize MSD hazards. They should know how to deal with concerns related to MSDs and how to reduce their exposure to MSD hazards. Managers, Supervisors and JHSC members should be given further training on: how to respond when employees report a concern, how to recognize MSD hazards, how to look for MSD hazards during inspections, and principles for controlling hazards in the workplace.

Sections 4-6 of the Guideline discuss how to recognize MSD hazards and how to conduct an MSD risk assessment. Sections 7 & 8 include choosing and implementing control measures for MSD hazards, as well as follow-up and evaluation of the measures.

The MSD Prevention Guideline is a generic style document that can be applied to any industry or sector. Where the differences lie from sector to sector is in the nature of the MSD hazards that can occur in those industries.

You can get a copy of the Guideline, Resource Manual and Toolbox by visiting the *Resource Centre* on ERGO Inc.'s website at www.ergoconsulting.net.

