

SafeSupervisor

YOUR FRONT-LINE MANAGER SAFETY RESOURCE SINCE 1929

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Check Yourself Out...

Here are 18 ways a great supervisor puts safety to work!

1. Takes the initiative in telling management about ideas for safer layout of equipment, tools and processes
2. Is a professional when it comes to taking care of equipment and keeping it safe
3. Knows the value of machine guards and makes sure that proper guards are provided and used
4. Takes pride in knowing how to use equipment safely
5. Takes charge of operations that are not routine to make certain that safety precautions are determined and observed
6. Arranges for adequate storage and enforces good housekeeping
7. Knows what materials are hazardous and how to handle them safely
8. Becomes an expert on waste disposal for good housekeeping and fire protection
9. Continues to 'talk safety' and impress safety on workers
10. Keeps an eye open for the employee who may be a safer worker in another job
11. Works with every person under them without favoritism, and helps employees work together
12. Establishes good relations with union stewards and with the safety committee
13. Sets the example in safety
14. Uses judgment in criticizing or praising, and knows the value of public praise
15. Not only explains how to do a job, but shows how, and observes to ensure it continues to be done safely
16. Studies the seemingly unimportant accidents and takes corrective measures
17. Keeps everyone informed of the safety policy
18. Knows what personal protective equipment is necessary on each job and sees that such equipment is used

By The Numbers: The Importance of Ergonomics

33% That's the proportion of all worker injury and illness cases that are caused by musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs), according to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics. Common examples include carpal tunnel syndrome, tendinitis, rotator cuff injuries, trigger finger, low back injuries, and arthritis. Although they can also be traumatic, most MSDs occur gradually over time as a result of prolonged and continuous exposure to vibration, contact stress, awkward postures, bending and twisting and other so called workplace stressors to which workers are exposed in doing their jobs.

8 out of 10 That's how many people are estimated to experience back pain sometime in their life, according to the American Chiropractic Association. Back pain is largely preventable via implementation of ergonomic measures designed to fit the job to the worker so as to reduce stress on the back.

8 days Is the median days absent for MSDs, according to the Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Nearly two weeks of workdays for everyone who experiences an MSD could be prevented in your workplace if ergonomics are a priority.

\$45 to \$54 billion Are the annual economic costs of MSDs for just the United States, according to the Institute of Medicine. Do you want to pay out any percentage of that cost year after year?

25 to 54 That's the age range which the CDC accounts for 79% of MSD cases. Both younger and senior employees can be affected by poor ergonomics. In fact, this shows that it is more likely for employees to be affected by poor ergonomics well before their retirement age!

What to Do When the Inspector First Shows Up

Trick or treat! It's not a ghost, a witch, a vampire or a werewolf who's been rapping at your door. It's something even scarier. It's the OSHA/OHS inspector, and they want to look around.

Here's what to do.

How Inspections Begin

OSHA or WCB usually conducts inspections during the regular working hours of your workplace. With some exceptions, OSHA and WCB don't notify the companies it inspects in advance. Inspectors usually show up unannounced.

When the inspection begins, the inspector must present credentials to the owner, owner representative, operator or agent in charge.



TIP : Ask to see the credentials of the inspector if they're not presented to you – just as you would ask any stranger who shows up at your facility unannounced. Asking for credentials isn't just your right; it's essential for your own security and the security of your workers. But don't cop an attitude. After all, a person who shows up claiming to be an OSHA/OHS inspector is likely to be who he claims to be. Be polite and non-confrontational when asking for credentials. If the visitor refuses to show credentials, take the necessary security precautions as instructed by your company policy guidelines.

Should You Let the Inspector In?

Darn right you should.

You can't refuse to let a bona fide OSHA inspector enter your facility. But you may ask the inspector to get a warrant to conduct the inspection before entering and refuse entry without a warrant.

Exceptions: You can't refuse entry for lack of a warrant if you or one of your representatives has already given consent to the inspection or if there's an emergency or urgent reason for the inspector to enter.



TIP: Before exercising this right, remember that the inspector is only human. Making his/her job more difficult just to stall for more time to prepare may cause you more difficulties during your inspection. But if you have a good reason you shouldn't hesitate to exercise your right to demand that the inspector get a warrant.

If the inspector does get the warrant, you must let her in. It's also illegal to interfere with the inspector's conduct of the inspection. But once the inspector is in, you may require her to follow the same policies, procedures and rules as any other employee or visitor. This includes insisting on the wearing of mandatory PPE, the removal of dangling jewelry, etc.



TIP: As part of your training or orientation, tell staff in advance what to expect if an inspector shows up. Appoint a contact person and instruct them to notify other necessary company officials, escort the inspector directly to a pre-determined area (conference room or office), and remain with the inspector until a company official arrives. Tell the contact person not to take the inspector through any area but the designated area of your facility until you have determined the purpose of the inspection.

Conclusion

My Halloween wish to you all is that these little pointers make your OSHA inspection experience a little less scary.

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Fatality File

MSDs don't kill; they just wreck lives

Musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs):

- Have the highest lost-time claim costs of any injury;
- Lead all injuries in number of lost time work days; and
- Account for between 20¢ and 60¢ of every \$1.00 of total workers' comp claims.

Yeah, But Can You Name Them?

These statistics are all very impressive, especially if you're a supervisor trying to train your workers on MSD prevention. The problem is that they're just that—statistics. Numbers can never do justice to the human costs of work injuries. And while that's true of all injuries, the coldness of the numbers really comes into play when you're dealing with a nonfatal hazard like MSDs.

After all, MSDs don't actually kill people. All they do is inflict career- and life-destroying pain and misery that sometimes can make victims wish they were dead. So while you'll need the metrics to document ROI, you can add human emotion to your training presentation by recounting the stories of real-life victims.

Better yet, you can let the victims tell their own stories in their own words. Here are 3 such personal victim accounts to get you started. You may also want to share these accounts with other supervisors so that they can use them to humanize their ergonomics training and demonstrate to workers that MSDs are flesh-and-blood real.

PHIL RITTER

"My name is Phil Ritter. My story begins when I was a 26-year-old site coordinator at a construction site where I often operated jackhammers.

"One day, I noticed a tingling at the very tip of my fingers like the stabbing of needles. The pain grew worse and worse. I couldn't sleep, hold a newspaper or a fork. I had to drive my truck open handed to get a grip on the wheel. I was taking 22 aspirin a day.

"I was diagnosed with RSI (repetitive stress injury) and carpal tunnel syndrome. I had to have surgery. It was a long recovery. I couldn't even put my socks on for the first 3 weeks.

"But I turned out to be luckier than most. Six months later, I went back to work and learned how to protect myself from MSDs. I learned to relax the hands so as not to grip the tools too hard, to protect myself from vibration, and so on.

"And I learned something else. There is a safe way. Victims of MSDs are too often told that it's all in their mind. This is not true. My advice to the workers out there is to learn the safe way and to ask somebody if they're not sure."

GARY WOODFORD

"My name is Gary Woodford. I'm 49. I worked for 26 years for C&S Propellers assembling and installing propellers on military and civilian aircraft. My job required me to lift propeller assemblies that weighed over 100 pounds.

"One day, I was lifting a propeller assembly dome, weighing 150 pounds, for a C 130 military plane into place so I could install it. I felt a sharp pain in my back and had to stop. I called my co-worker for help. I had injured 2 discs, which were pressing on my spinal cord.

"My life hasn't been the same since. I can't hike, camp, run or do anything active."

HENRIETTE BARCLAY

"My name is Henriette Barclay. I'm 60 years old. I am married. My husband, Harlan, and I have no children.

"I worked for a national drug store chain as a shift supervisor, stocker, and pretty much anything else that was needed. On April 26, 2004, I was helping to unload a truck. When I picked up one of the crates, I heard a pop in my right shoulder. After 15 minutes, I couldn't move. I was in extreme pain. I had torn my rotator cuff.

"I have had 3 surgeries, and my injury is still not corrected. The last MRI showed a tear that had been there all along, but had not been repaired.

"I've lost 3 years of income, as I'm unable to work because of my shoulder injury. My shoulder is getting worse, instead of better. I used to love to do Country Dancing, but I can't reach my arm over my head any longer. I used to knit and crochet, but now I get so frustrated that I usually end up crying. I can no longer reach, pick up anything over 1 pound, do the laundry, or even blow dry my hair."

Picture This

Heave Ho and Away We Go

If the worker at the bottom of this photo seems to be straining as he hoists a heavy bucket full of material, imagine the strain on the worker above him who is trying to haul it to the top of this platform.

Any number of things could go badly here. The worker taking the load could lose his grip and drop it on his co-worker. Worse, he could lose his balance and he and the load could crash down on the other worker. At the least, the elevated worker's poor lifting position could easily leave him with a back injury. Any way you look at it, it's not a pretty picture. (Elcosh)



Be a Better Supervisor - Improving Ergonomics to Avoid MSDs

The Risks

The word “ergonomics” refers to the science of designing and arranging the physical workplace in a way that’s most efficient and safe to workers. While that may sound technical, ergonomics is of crucial and immediate importance to protect workers to risks of musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs), a form of gradual and invisible but also serious injury that includes arthritis, lower back pain, carpal tunnel syndrome and tendinitis. Work-related MSDs have become increasingly common and now account for 33% of all workers’ comp claims. Consequently, effective use of ergonomic measures to prevent MSDs can keep your workers safe, healthy and productive and save your company huge sums of money.

Be A Better Supervisor

Here’s a quick overview of some of the most common work-related MSDs.

Arthritis

An estimated 350 000 000 people worldwide have a form of arthritis. Although there are many types of arthritis, the one most influenced by workplace activities is osteoarthritis. Osteoarthritis is influenced by normal wear and tear on joints. Symptoms of the disease include swelling, bone spurs, grating sensations, stiffness, and pain. There are numerous personal factors for the disease, but in the workplace, repeated stress on a joint is an important factor. Particularly in manual labor or repeatedly active tasks, there is an increased risk of osteoarthritis. Some examples of activities include shoveling, scooping ice cream, or lifting objects. As a supervisor, you want to educate employees on techniques to do their jobs with as little joint stress as possible. While muscles get stronger, joints wear down, so the best thing to do in the workplace is to focus physical stress on muscles, not joints. As well, it is worthwhile to supply ergonomic tools that can handle the stress otherwise put on joints. Examples may include hand carts, machines, or hand tools.

Back Pain

Back injuries and pain are a significant problem for businesses. The American Chiropractic Association estimates that both 80% of the population will experience back pain in their lifetime and that back pain costs business in the United States \$100 billion annually. It’s no small matter and will likely affect you or someone within your company in the foreseeable future. Most commonly, back pain causes pain, decreased quality of life, stiffness, reduced strength, and increases time to complete tasks. The causes of back pain include poor posture, poor lifting techniques, psychological stress, and internal diseases. In the workplace, you can reduce the likelihood of back pain by

teaching proper lifting technique and adapting workstations for proper posture. Proper posture means aligning the spine into its natural “S” like curve. Commonly, we slouch into a “C” curve which relaxes muscles but increases stress on the joints. Muscles then become underdeveloped and back pain ensues easily. To reduce back pain, you want employees to strengthen their backs to avoid straining when exerting themselves.

Carpal Tunnel Syndrome

Carpal tunnel syndrome (CTS) is a disease in which there is swelling around the median nerve, which connects the hand to the arm. Lesser symptoms of CTS include numbness and weakness of the hand, but severe symptoms can involve pain and burning up the arm and loss of hand function. Nonsurgical treatments, like wrists splints and steroid injections, are preferred, but when surgery is necessary recovery time can last several weeks to several months. It’s not ideal for employees to lose hand function or need several months off, but necessary, repetitive wrist motions can increase the risk of CTS in the workplace. Jobs that are in manufacturing, assembly lines, construction, and computing all increase this risk. As a supervisor, you should improve hand posture at employee workstations and reduce the number of tasks that require over-extending the wrist. This may mean supplying equipment like pads or wrist rests to reduce physical pressure, for example. It also helps to teach employees wrist exercises they can do to improve their wrist strength and reduce swelling.

Tendinitis

Tendinitis is the inflammation of a tendon, most commonly seen in shoulders, elbows, wrists, knees, and heels. You may have heard of different names like Golfer’s elbow, Tennis elbow, Jumper’s knee, or Pitcher’s shoulder that actually describe the problems of tendinitis. Majority of cases are easily treated with rest, physical therapy, and medications, but some severe cases do require surgery. Often, tendinitis will result in time off work. The most common occupational hazards include repetitive motions, awkward positions, frequent overhead reaching, vibrations, or forceful exertion. Like the other MSDs we have looked at, ergonomics around tendinitis involve looking at ways to reduce physical stress on workers. You might want to invest in machinery, tools, or furniture that allows employees to be in natural positions and reduce physical strain while working. Examples of equipment includes adjustable chairs, forklifts, handcarts, ladders, and roller carts.

Fatality File

Workplace Harassment can Lead to an Active Shooter Event

The most tragic outcome of workplace harassment is active shooter events. In the past few decades, it seems like active shooter events have been increasing in frequency in both the United States and Canada.

These events shock the nation and call into question on how they could've been prevented or stopped. Although there are many factors, many active shooter events involve workplace harassment.

There are numerous examples of an enraged ex-employee who decides their colleagues need to be punished, but the example we will focus on right now is about an angered citizen. This citizen harassed the staff of a local newspaper for years while he pursued a defamation lawsuit against the paper for publishing an article about his criminal harassment conviction.

The citizen lost the lawsuit—the article wasn't defamation because it was based on publicly available facts—but continued to harass the newspaper staff via in social media, letters, and personal encounters.

The publisher contacted the police department and attempted to get a restraining order, but the citizen was still able to enter

the ground of the newspaper company, kill five people with a shotgun, and injure two more. He was caught but it was too late to undo the catastrophic damage.

The families of the murdered staff were no doubt shattered by this event. It can also be assumed that the years of harassment and death threats would've taken a toll on the victims and other staff of the newspaper.

The Moral

Harassment isn't just a workplace nuisance or a liability risk. It can literally be a matter of life and death on those all too frequent occasions when harassment escalates to violence.

Workplace harassment should be addressed and reduced regardless of it being between those in the workplace or a third party, as in this case.

If there is a risk or current workplace harassment for you, **you must install protections and take the preventive steps to survive an escalation.**

A tragedy is undesirable in any setting.

Picture This

Empathize with the Victim

Imagine being the woman in this photo.

What sort of feelings would you have? Someone who makes you uncomfortable is reaching to touch your face without asking.

To make matters worse, there's another person sitting next to you who sees it all without doing anything, despite sensing your obvious discomfort. Being victimized by harassment can be a very lonely feeling even when it happens in the presence of others.

Situations like this are all too common. Harassment happens all the time but is under reported by both victims and bystanders due to fears of retaliation and beliefs that we just need to "tough it out."

Often, harassment leads to shame and victims don't feel like they don't have the right to complain because they've put up with it for so long. This is how you end up with situations like in this photo where the victim thinks she can do little more than turn her head away. And bystanders either participate in the humiliation or feel powerless to prevent or report it.

As a supervisor, you need to ensure situations like this don't happen in your workplace. Pass this photo around as an example of harassment and the cost of being a bystander.



Harassment only stops when people talk about it and call for change. Educate employees on their options and make them feel safe to report complaints and concerns. Dedicate yourself to making sure the scene portrayed in this photo doesn't unfold in your workplace and on your watch!

Be A Better Supervisor - Understanding Harassment

The Risk

Harassment of any kind is unacceptable in the workplace for obvious reasons: lawsuits, company image, morale, productivity. Preferably, harassment would be non-existent or happen once a decade. Although it may feel like harassment doesn't happen that often, that's not because it doesn't; it's because of under reporting.

There are many factors that go into under reporting, including fear of retaliation, embarrassment, perception that reporting won't result in real action and social norms. Another reason employees don't report harassment is lack of knowledge about what harassment is. For example, a 2016 report from the US Equal Employment Opportunities Commission found that when women are asked if they've ever experienced "sexual harassment" in the workplace without defining the term, only 1 in 4 answer yes. But when the question is rephrased to include an explanation of what sexual harassment is, 60% of women report experiencing some form of it in the workplace.

Moral: When it comes to workplace harassment, knowledge matters. As a supervisor, it's important to ensure your employees understand what harassment is. If they recognize the behavior, they'll have a better understanding of what is and isn't acceptable in the workplace; they'll also be more likely to come forward and report if they experience or witness acts of harassment.

Be A Better Supervisor

Sexual Harassment

Possibly the most present in current forms of media, sexual harassment is a hallmark of destroyed brand images and ruined company trust. Despite products and services, sexual harassment can be devastating to careers for both perpetrators and those who turn a blind eye or cover it up. The damages are severe, and rightfully so due to the nature of the crime. It's best for everyone if sexual harassment is avoided in the workplace, but it's not always clear what is harassment and what is flirting. In truth, consent is very much a deciding matter in what is considered harassment. Nonetheless, consent should never be assumed, and here are some examples of acts that could be considered harassment, for both your reference and to teach employees:

- Crude jokes
- Touching; groping
- Sexual coercion
- Quid-pro-quo
- Sexual acts
- Exposing oneself to another
- Invading personal space (i.e. sniffing hair, standing too close, leaning over)
- Lewd comments
- Explicit imagery and/or revealing imagery

Physical Harassment

Physical harassment is often easier to spot and define. Majority

of the time, it is clear when a physical act is taken too far, but sometimes it may not be clear that a back slap is considered harassment by someone. Factors to consider in physical harassment are strength (no one can know how others feel their strength), placement of the act (shoulder punch is often considered friendlier than a face punch), and comfort (not everyone wants to be hit). In addition to these factors, here are some examples of physical acts:

- Punching
- Patting
- Slapping
- Kicking
- Elbowing
- Biting

Emotional Harassment

Emotional, or psychological, harassment is likely the most unclear and possibly the most common. Sexual harassment and physical harassment have the largest consequences, but emotional harassment often doesn't have consequences. It's more societally accepted that the victim needs to stand up for themselves with emotional harassment. Nonetheless, emotional harassment has serious consequences for victims, like anxiety, depression, and fear, that ripple into the overall organization's workforce. Productivity is hindered because of negative emotions. For company profitability, it's fundamental for employees to want to come to work. Here are some examples to watch out for:

- Bullying
- Threats
- Jokes making fun of someone
- Manipulation
- Lies
- Leading on romantic, sexual, fiscal, or promotional rewards for effort
- Name-calling
- Spreading gossip

Who Can Commit Harassment

Harassment isn't just men harassing women. It's gender-agnostic. Men and women can commit it; and men and women can be the victims of it. It can be hetero- or homosexual. Harassment can be committed not just by co-workers, supervisors and managers but also by persons outside the organization that employees routinely encounter in the course of their work, such as customers or personnel from other companies who work at the same site.

Takeaways

The first part of reducing harassment is understanding examples and types of harassment. When people don't know if an act is harassment, often they take the safe way out and do nothing in fear of overreacting. The solution is not to react to everything, but it is to understand what deserves a reaction. That knowledge starts with you, the supervisor, teaching them.

Workplan - Preventing Workplace Harassment More Effectively

Harassment in the workplace can come in many forms: sexual, racial, religious, physical, or psychological. Often, the terms bullying, abuse, and manipulation will be tied to harassment. According to a 2016 report from the US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) (the US equivalent of Canadian human rights commissions):

- At least 1 in 4 people are affected by workplace harassment; and
- 75% of harassment victims experience retaliation.

Workplace harassment also costs companies millions. For example, from 2010 to 2016, US companies paid out \$681.7 million as a result of EEOC harassment proceedings. Proportionally, the costs are similar in Canada where workplace harassment results in complaints and litigation under provincial human rights laws. And keep in mind that these figures account only for harassment based on race, sex, religion, disability and other characteristics protected by discrimination laws. These costs would likely double or triple if you add in workplace harassment claims of workers not protected by human rights laws, e.g., white males.

Bottom Line: Combatting workplace harassment isn't just a legal but also a business imperative.

Preventing Workplace Harassment

All companies ban workplace harassment. Or at least they should. But prohibiting workplace harassment is just the beginning of the effort to root it out. Workplace safety and other laws require employers to implement a workplace harassment prevention and response program composed of the following elements.

Anti-Harassment Policy

The first thing you need is a clear written statement letting workers know that the company is dedicated to providing a harassment-free workplace and listing:

- A statement that workplace harassment will not be tolerated from anybody from the highest executives to the most junior workers;
- A description of what is and isn't workplace harassment—the latter includes constructive, professional criticism by persons in positions of authority;
- Examples of harassment;
- A description of the company's procedure for reporting and investigating harassment complaints;
- A statement assuring workers that nobody will suffer retaliation for reporting harassment or exercising his/her rights to a harassment-free workplace.

Harassment Reporting Mechanism

Many if not most acts of harassment go unreported. So,

it's imperative to establish a system and set of procedures workers can feel comfortable using to report harassment they experience or witness. The system must provide for keeping personal information about the parties involved—both accuser and accused—confidential and avoid disclosure except where required to investigate or by law.

Harassment Investigation System

There must be a system for investigating reports of harassment promptly, thoroughly and fairly to both accusers and accused. Investigations must be undertaken by a competent person with experience in investigating harassment complaints, ideally a third person from outside the company. Harassment complaints should never be investigated by the people involved in the case, like a supervisor accused.

Harassment Resolution System

You also need a process for resolving complaints on the basis of the investigation results. If the accusations are found to be true, the accused should be subject to immediate and appropriate discipline in accordance with your company's disciplinary policies and procedures. To ensure fairness and maximize workers' faith in the system, an increasing number of companies are using third party mediators to resolve harassment matters.

Support for Victims

Companies must show support for harassment victims, e.g., recommending that they get psychological counseling from trusted providers, preferably at company expense. They should not be treated as troublemakers or subject to reprisal of any kind.

Harassment Information and Training

You must ensure all workers get information and training about not only workplace harassment and what it is but also the program measures you've put in place to deal with it, e.g., the reporting and investigation processes. Such training and information should be provided when workers first start working and periodically as necessary.

Harassment Incident Reporting

Depending on your jurisdiction, you may have to report incidents of workplace harassment to the government occupational health and safety agency and/or workers' comp board.

Program Monitoring

Last but not least, you must monitor your harassment prevention program at least once every 2 years and more frequently in response to incidents, complaints or other indications that the current program is ineffective and needs to be improved.

Workplace Violence Risk Diagnosis and Prevention Checklist

Violence, including murder and assault, can happen in any workplace, at any time, in any industry and in any setting. Implementing clear and strong policies, combined with management support and effective implementation of policies and procedures, are all important measures to help protect workers.

Each workplace is different, and the steps needed to prevent violence against workers may vary. Be sure to account for differences in your working environment as you plan and implement policies and procedures to stop workplace violence.

The following checklist identifies some of the questions you need to ask to help you recognize the danger signs and prevent future acts of violence in your workplace.

Recognize the Risks	YES	NO	Recognize the Risks	YES	NO
Do you have direct contact with the public?			Do you serve people who might be volatile or unstable?		
Are there large amounts of cash in your worksite?			Is your workplace in a high crime zone?		
Do you transport passengers?			Are valuables kept in your work location?		
Does your business provide goods or services?			Do you work in a community-based setting?		
Do people at your worksite work alone or in small groups?			Are humans to blame (i.e. are employees clumsy or distracted)?		

If you answered “yes” to one or more of these questions, then you may have a workplace that is at high risk for violence. It means you need to take action. Below are some things you can check to help improve the situation.

Anti-Violence Strategies	YES	NO	Anti-Violence Strategies	YES	NO
Your workers are separated from clients by barriers, such as bulletproof glass.			Security guards accompany workers to their cars after hours.		
All actions against employees who are violent or cause disruptions are taken promptly and are not postponed.			Responsibility for implementing and enforcing the plan has been assigned to appropriate personnel.		
Signs are visible stating that employees have no money or no access to money.			Employees are trained on how to recognize increasingly aggressive behavior.		
Desk areas have emergency buttons that are readily accessible.			Employees have been trained to recognize risks that could lead to violence.		
Security alarms are connected to company security and to local police.			There is a standard response to all incidents and suspicious events.		
Metal detectors are present at all entry doors.			Employees report all incidents and suspicious events.		
The work area is well lighted.			Cash kept on site is limited by deposits into lock boxes.		
Parking lots are well lighted.			Records are kept of all incidents and suspicious events.		
Security guards patrol the area, including parking lots.			Counseling sessions are available after an incident occurs.		
A security analysis of the workplace has been conducted.			There is a workplace security plan in place.		
All violent incidents are discussed with affected employees.			Employees have been trained on how to help reduce conflict.		
Visitors are not allowed to wander through the workplace unescorted.			Employees are protected from reprisals for reporting conflicts.		
There is a workplace violence policy in place and the plan is periodically reviewed and updated.			Employees clearly understand the consequences of violent or disruptive behavior.		
All employees have been trained in how the workplace violence policy works.			There are working security cameras throughout the workplace, including stairwells and garages.		

Workplan - Industrial Ergonomics Gameplan

Most workers know what Ergonomics is. Some will even say they know how to prevent MSDs. But most *really don't*. Use this gameplan on how to communicate the importance of Workplace Ergonomics and MSDs to your employees to keep them safe on the job.

GET THEIR ATTENTION: Start out by telling workers that MSDs don't end lives; they merely destroy them. MSDs are more severe than normal work injuries because they can:

- Disable you;
- Inflict horrible pain that lasts the rest of your life;
- Make it impossible for you to ever work again;
- Destroy your ability to do even simple things like walk, grip a steering wheel, brush your teeth, or hold a spoon.

MAKE IT REAL: Note that MSDs often lead to crushing poverty, depression and even suicide. Share some of the heartbreaking stories of real-life victims.

EXPLAIN WHAT MSDs ARE: Having set the tone, explain what MSDs actually are. Tell workers that the things they do at work every day, like lifting objects, reaching up to stack an object and squeezing the handle of a tool, put a strain on muscles, nerves, bones, joints, back, shoulders and limbs. Working these body parts too hard or in the wrong way can cause serious damage and result in chronic back pain, carpal tunnel syndrome, strains, sprains and other MSDs.

EXPLAIN HOW MSDs CAN HAPPEN: Explain that MSDs can be either traumatic or cumulative. Traumatic injuries happen in a single incident, like wrenching your back when lifting a heavy object; cumulative MSDs sneak up on you because they build up gradually as a result of repeated stress over a period of time, like back injuries from lifting heavy objects day after day for 10 years.

EXPLAIN THE RISKS OF MSDs: Tell workers that their risk of getting an MSD depends on 3 sets of risk factors:

1. General risk factors affect any and all people, including:
 - Duration—how long exposure to a strain or stress last;
 - Frequency—how often you're exposed; and
 - Intensity—how much the exposure strains your body while it lasts;
2. Job-related risk factors associated with performing certain jobs or tasks, including:
 - Lifting and moving heavy or bulky objects;
 - Reaching above, below or across your body;
 - Prolonged squatting, kneeling or standing;
 - Repetition—doing the same physical task over and over again over a consecutive period;

- Tightly gripping tools or other objects;
 - Contact stress—tasks that involve physical contact with hard objects or edges
3. Individual risk factors are physical characteristics that can make a person less capable of withstanding strains and thus more vulnerable to MSDs, such as being:
 - Over age 45;
 - Female;
 - Out of shape;
 - Overweight;
 - A smoker; or
 - On certain kinds of medications.

EXPLAIN HOW YOU CONTROL MSD RISKS: Describe the measures your company uses to protect workers from MSD risks, including:

- Engineering controls like lifting devices, ergonomically designed tools or work stations, etc.;
- Administrative or work controls like safe work procedures such as for lifting heavy objects, rotating workers in and out of high risk tasks to prevent continuous exposure, regular rest and recovery breaks, etc.; and
- PPE and safety equipment like anti-vibration gloves or mats, wrist rests on computer keyboards, etc.

EXPLAIN THE WARNING SIGNS OF MSDs: Make sure workers recognize that MSDs can sneak up on them and describe the signs and symptoms they should look for, including:

- Aching in joints or muscles;
- Muscle weakness;
- Fatigue;
- Tingling or numbness in fingers, toes, hands or feet;
- Swelling, inflammation or redness;
- Stiffness or difficulty moving;
- Inability to use hands or wrists to do certain basic things;
- Burning sensation;
- Stabbing or shooting pain, especially at night; and
- Reduced grip strength

LET THEM KNOW WHAT TO DO IF THEY HAVE SYMPTOMS: Tell workers to immediately notify their supervisor or manager if they experience any of the above signs or symptoms. Explain that early diagnosis and treatment is crucial when dealing with MSDs and that waiting often makes the injury much worse. Reassure them that their complaints will be investigated and that they won't suffer any kind of punishment or reprisal for bringing it.

Checklist: Identifying Ergonomic Risks

Ergonomic injuries often creep up on people after years of work. Slowly, a great employee can't lift as much, must take frequent breaks, and is suddenly diagnosed with a form of arthritis. Not only is it undesirable to lose an experienced, successful employee, but it is also heartbreaking to see someone suffer for the rest of their life because of a preventable injury.

As a supervisor, it is up to you to ensure that employees are in the best situation to prevent ergonomic injuries. For your assistance, we have developed the following checklist to help you identify common ergonomic risks and help employees overcome them.

Risk	Yes?	Why Not?
Do employees have workstations that can be adjusted to their height and other body measurements?		
Do employees have access to tools that are in good condition which reduce the strain of tasks?		
Do employees only have to handle materials manually on rare occasion?		
Have employees been trained in proper lift technique?		
Is the workspace built in a way that prevents employees from taking materials up and down stairs or ladders manually?		
Do employees have access to tools that help carry materials, such as carts, pulleys, trolleys, or roller boards?		
Are employees not put in positions that break the natural alignment of their spines, such as bending over, hunching, crawling, etc.?		
Do employees have rests for their wrists and feet, if they are sitting or using their hands at a desk?		
Have employees been educated on the importance of personal health and which muscle groups relate specifically to their jobs?		
Are there healthy options for the snacks available in the workplace, to reduce excessive weight gain?		
Are employees encouraged to walk around if they are in a sitting position throughout the day?		
Are employees familiar with their weight carrying capacities?		
Do employees regularly get physical exams?		
Is the workplace adaptable for employee physical needs?		
Have employees been educated on stretches they can do for the muscles they use on the job?		
Are common ergonomic risks in the workplace identified and discussed?		
Are temperatures within the workplace suitable to reduce muscle strain, or are employees encouraged to wear cool/warm clothing?		
Are tasks varied so that employees aren't repeating the same activity all day long?		

Focus On: 8 Tips for Protecting Workers from Indoor Thermal Conditions

Here are eight tips from the *NIOSH Science Blog* on work practices you can use to protect workers from heat stress whether due to work outdoors or indoor thermal conditions:

1. Limit time in the heat, increase recovery time spent in a cool environment or both.
2. Reduce the metabolic demands of the job, such as by using tools with efficient ergonomic designs or specifically intended to minimize manual strain, or increasing the number of workers per task.
3. Train supervisors and workers to recognize early signs and symptoms of heat-related illnesses and to administer appropriate first aid.
4. Implement a buddy system where workers observe each other for early signs and symptoms of heat intolerance.
5. Some situations may require workers to conduct self-monitoring. A work group, which includes workers, a qualified healthcare provider and a safety manager, should be developed to make decisions on self-monitoring options and standard operating procedures.
6. Provide adequate amounts of cool, potable water near the work area and encourage workers to drink.
 - a. If in the heat <2 hours and involved in moderate work activities, drink 1 cup (8 oz.) of water every 15–20 minutes.
 - b. During prolonged sweating lasting several hours, drink sports drinks containing balanced electrolytes.
 - c. Avoid alcohol and drinks with high caffeine or sugar.
 - d. Generally, fluid intake should not exceed 6 cups per hour.
7. Implement a heat alert program whenever the weather service forecasts that a heat wave is likely to occur in the following days.
8. Institute a heat acclimatization plan and increase physical fitness. Gradually increase time in hot conditions over 7 to 14 days.
 - a. For new workers: The schedule should be no more than 20% of the usual duration of work in the heat on day 1 and no more than 20% increase on each additional day. Closely supervise new employees for the first 14 days or until they're fully acclimated.
 - b. For workers with previous experience: The schedule should be no more than 50% of the usual duration of work in the heat on day 1, 60% on day 2, 80% on day 3, and 100% on day 4

Safety Clothing Can Expose Workers to the Risk of Heat Stress

Employers have a basic duty to protect workers from foreseeable safety hazards. But they must be careful not to expose workers to one hazard while trying to protect them from another.

The following example which happened in the US is also relevant in Canada, maybe even more so because of worker refusal rights.

A refinery in Louisiana hired a contractor to demolish piping in its sulfuric acid alkylation unit. A 45-year-old pipefitter, who was cutting pipe in four layers of clothing—including a chemical resistant encapsulating suit—died on the job. At the time, the temperature was 83°F (28.3°C).

The US Department of Labor's Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) investigated the incident and cited the contractor for failing to implement a heat management program. OSHA specifically noted that employer failed to take into consideration the increased heat stress caused by the specialized clothing being worn by the workers as they cut and removed the piping.

So in the contractor's well-intentioned and necessary efforts to protect its workers from contact with hazardous chemicals, it inadvertently exposed them to heat stress instead.

Other kinds of PPE, such as respirators, can also increase the risk of heat stress under certain conditions.

Bottom line: When implementing safety measures, consider the impact that such measures may have and any potential safety hazards the measures may create or exacerbate.

Safety Training – Supervisors Must Be Masters of All Trades

How did you land in your role as a supervisor? Perhaps it was because you were good at a previous job and management believed you could take on a new challenge.

But the word “challenge” may not even begin to describe the learning curve most supervisors face in the first months or years in that role.

Michael Topf, an organizational trainer and consultant, said many new supervisors, along with more than a few experienced ones, have little idea how to lead, instruct and supervise workers effectively.

“They are left to their own devices to figure out how to get people to do their work and how to carry out all the leadership responsibilities that a manager or supervisor is supposed to do,” said Topf.

He leads Topf Initiatives in Wayne, PA, and specializes in executive leadership, management and line employee development, as well as safety, health and environmental cultural change and attitudinal/behavioral change.

Many large companies have felt the effects of various kinds of organizational changes, such as downsizing, reorganizing or upsizing, which have impacted so many workers. These companies, said Topf, experience the pressure to have supervisors and leaders readily available to handle the production demands to keep them profitable.

“Many of these same companies have their own internal training and safety departments and have the advantage of providing in-house supervisory and safety training. However, most new supervisors and managers state they were just thrust into the job, without the necessary training to prepare them for what they will experience given other priorities of their leadership,” he said.

Supervisors who work in smaller companies that do not have internal training and safety departments suddenly find themselves on the shop floor or in the “safety department” with some quick catching up to do.

Topf said all companies, whether large or small, should require and provide sufficient training to orient supervisors to procedures related to the job, technical aspects of the operation, human resources policies and OSHA or state/provincial health and safety regulations that need to be followed – before they set foot on the shop floor.

This training should cover all supervisory positions relating to production, distribution, research, sales or administration. In reality, Topf says, a gradual immersion into a supervisory role is unlikely.

Trying to grasp the knowledge necessary to keep workers safe

can be a massive challenge for a supervisor who is new to the job. While doing this is a job in itself, there’s another aspect of the job that new supervisors need to master if they hope to be successful, says Topf.

New supervisors need training on what it means to be a leader and how to interact with other employees “so that you stand the greatest chance of getting cooperation and buy-in from your employees and co-workers, as well as from other supervisors and managers,” according to Topf.

Some companies operate with a command and control approach – the “follow-my-instructions-because-I-told-you-so” model. Topf said that approach often leads to resentment among employees, who may respond by doing just enough to get by in their jobs.

“This can result in safety incidents, breakdowns in equipment and a decline in results.”

Supervisors need training on how to communicate respectfully regardless of whether employees are being cooperative or resistant.

“They need to know how to coach and counsel when people are not doing their jobs according to required standards, whether this relates to working safely or in a quality manner, or are being late every day. If you deal with people in a negative way they most likely will develop a negative attitude.”

An effective supervisor ensures that employees at all levels are properly trained and equipped, and that they have the proper instruction and direction to do their jobs safely in a quality manner and not cut corners or bypass procedures.

“They’ve got to ensure that people not only know this information, but practice it in reality,” said Topf.

Learning to be an effective supervisor also entails knowing how to properly correct behaviors that do not conform to requirements and how to discipline employees who, despite several reminders, do not comply with safety or other regulations or requirements of their job.

“There’s one other point – supervisors, managers and safety professionals need to be trained to be internal sales people. You need to be able to sell your manager on what you need to do your job. If you, or the employees you are responsible for need safety (or leadership) training or you want to go to a safety conference or bring in an outside trainer, you have to be able to sell them on it.”

If you believe you could use some brushing up on leadership and communication skills, talk to your own manager about the possibility.