Construction Fact Sheet

Ergonomic Change Teams

The Problem

- Musculoskeletal disorders (MSD), such as back pain, are the biggest cause of lost time and disability in the construction sector.
- Construction work is heavy and the fluid nature of the worksite can make it difficult to make changes to reduce loads on the body

Possible Solutions

- Participatory Ergonomics (PE) is a process that involves workers and supervisors working together to identify, and change highly demanding tasks and activities to reduce high loads on the body: working smarter.
- Bringing people together to solve a problem can improve the solution and increase its chance of being used.
- One form of PE is the creation of workplace-based cross-functional Ergonomic Change Teams (ECTs).
- PE usually requires a champion to form and facilitate the cross-functional team.
- The ergonomic process includes identifying hazards, prioritizing jobs for improvement, evaluating concerns using ergonomic tools and techniques, implementing and evaluating how well the change is working, and performing follow-up evaluations to see if new problems have been created.
- ECTs are responsible for running the ergonomic process. They require:
  - participation and consultation,
  - management support,
  - adequate resources,
  - education and training
Possible Tools

- *The Participatory Ergonomics Implementation Blueprint* developed by Richard Wells and his colleagues in 2001 is a recommended resource. This describes steps to form and maintain ergonomics processes that can improve work design and thus reduce injury risk, improve comfort, and optimize quality and productivity.
  

- Ontario Health and Safety Council of Ontario's (OHSCO) *MSD Prevention Guideline for Ontario*
  
  [http://www.wsib.on.ca/wsib/wsibsitemfs/Public/PreventMSD](http://www.wsib.on.ca/wsib/wsibsitemfs/Public/PreventMSD)

- Institute for Work & Health’s: *Reducing MSD hazards in the workplace: A guide to successful participatory ergonomics programs.*
  
  [http://www.iwh.on.ca/pe-guide](http://www.iwh.on.ca/pe-guide)

Benefits

- PE interventions have a positive impact on musculoskeletal symptoms, reduce injuries, and reduce workers’ compensation claims and lost days from work.

- PE enhances communication and improves team members' perceptions of the program usefulness.

References
