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Ergonomics Policy and Procedure for the
City of Los Angeles

POLICY STATEMENT:
The City of Los Angeles is committed to providing a safe and healthy workplace for all City employees. As part of the comprehensive Occupational Safety and Health Program, the Ergonomic Section is designed to improve the safety of employees by identification and remediation of ergonomic risk factors in the work environment. The program is designed to remediate work-related repetitive motion injuries (RMIs) through education of proper work habits, body position and use of appropriate equipment. When necessary, additional equipment may be recommended.

INTRODUCTION:
Ergonomics is defined as the science of designing the job, equipment, and workplace to better fit the worker and examining the interaction between the worker and his/her environment. Applying ergonomic principles can help reduce the risk of injuries or illnesses for employees working with computers, working in laboratories, and working at jobs requiring repetitive activities and heavy materials handling. The Occupational Safety & Health Administration (OSHA) reports 1.8 million work related RMIs annually, such as carpal tunnel syndrome, tendonitis, and back injuries. About 600,000 RMIs each year are serious enough to prevent employees from working. Many employees initially do not report discomfort, choosing to use self-prescribed or over-the-counter solutions. Ergonomics can provide early intervention and solutions to prevent or reduce the severity of soft tissue injuries, resulting in increased productivity, improved quality of work performance and enhanced quality of life.

PURPOSE:
The purpose of the City’s ergonomics program is to reduce or eliminate hazards that contribute to the development of musculoskeletal disorders. The program involves all employees whose job duties expose them to ergonomic risk factors. The primary tools of the Ergonomic Program include symptoms survey, worksite evaluations, training, and implementation of ergonomic control strategies. The City of Los Angeles is committed to improving employee’s health, safety and well being through preventative measures such as communication and training, as well as by identification and remediation of ergonomic risk factors on the job.

SCOPE:
Under this program, City work environments will be evaluated to identify and correct ergonomic deficiencies through engineering, work practices, education, training and administrative controls. This program applies to all City employees.
WORK STRATEGY CONTROLS:
When an ergonomic risk has been identified, the Occupational Safety and Health Division (OSHD) will work with the requesting department and employee to minimize or eliminate the hazard. General approaches to managing ergonomic risks include training, engineering, and administrative and work practice controls.

Training Controls: The Personnel Department Occupational Safety and Health Division’s ergonomist offers many types of training to employees to reduce/prevent risks that cause RMIIs. Affected employees shall be provided training that includes an explanation of:

- The City of Los Angeles Personnel Department OSHD Written Ergonomic Program;
- The exposures that have been identified to be associated with RMIIs;
- The symptoms and consequences of injuries caused by repetitive motion;
- The importance of early reporting of symptoms and injuries to the employer; and
- Methods utilized by the OSHD to minimize RMIIs

Engineering Controls: Changes made to the workstation, equipment, or accessories that alter the physical components of the workstation. Workstations should be easily adjustable and designed for the specific task as well as the individual performing the task. Attention shall be paid to the static loading of muscles, work activity height, reach requirements, force requirements, sharp or hard edges, proper seating, support for the limbs, equipment orientation and layout of the workstation.

Administrative Controls: Changes made to reduce exposure without making changes to the environment. Administrative controls involve supervisor buy-in and support by assisting the employee in work modifications or rotations to reduce or eliminate risk. An example is taking rest pauses or breaks to relieve fatigued muscle tension. This can be accomplished by more frequent changes of particular job duties. Administrative controls also involve willingness to obtain recommended equipment to reduce or eliminate risk and can be used in combination with other controls.

Work Practice Controls: Changes in the way the employee performs the physical work activities of the job that reduce or control exposure to RMI hazards. Alternating work tasks, taking required breaks, purchase of proper eyeglasses, following ergonomic recommendations, regular stretching and maintenance of overall health are examples of work practice controls.

PROCEDURES:
The Occupational Safety and Health Division of the Personnel Department is responsible for responding to requests for ergonomic evaluations and trainings. Evaluations are designed to reduce and prevent the occurrence of permanent
work-related injuries for the requesting employee through evaluation, education, training, consultation and written recommendations. Outside ergonomic consultants can also be utilized in certain situations. The trainings are designed to empower employees to implement changes that will enhance the safety of their work environments and circumstances.

How to Place a Request:
Employees or administrators seeking information on ergonomics, or who would like to place a request, should visit the City Personnel website at:
http://www.lacity.org/per/safety/Safety_Ergo.htm

The HEALTH AND SAFETY SERVICE REQUEST (HSSR) form must be completed on-line and must be approved by the employee’s supervisor prior to the on-site visit. It is essential that the supervisor be involved through the entire process of the evaluation to ensure that all recommendations are carried out in the best interest of the employee. If another entity is involved who will be purchasing recommended equipment, such as the Department on Disability, the supervisor should be notified but does not have to approve the request.

Evaluation Procedure:
The ergonomic specialist will contact the employee to schedule an appointment for his or her on-site evaluation. At the time of the evaluation, the employee must be present and participate in the evaluation. The evaluation generally lasts one hour in length. The employee is expected to explain and demonstrate some or all of his or her regular work duties. Questions will be asked about the concerns being reported, why an evaluation was requested, what efforts have been made to improve the current situation and what the employee feels is needed to further improve the situation. These questions help the evaluator understand the representative working conditions of the employee. “Before” and “after” photographs will be taken and used on-site for educational purposes, as well as in the report for clarification and justification of recommendations.

Any immediate improvement that can be made will be done so at the time of the evaluation, including repositioning or adjusting current equipment. Any further recommendations will be discussed with the employee and supervisor if present, and documented in a written report. The report will detail the evaluator’s findings and list necessary and optional recommendations. Those recommendations may include a change in the placement of furniture and equipment, and/or the purchase or procurement of additional equipment.

The requesting department is responsible for addressing all the recommendations made in the ergonomic evaluation such as ordering, purchase and making arrangements for installation of recommended equipment. In addition, the department is responsible for placing work order requests to modify the workstation including, but not limited to, elevating or lowering a desk surface through a General Services work order. The form to place a work order can be found at the following link:
http://gsd.ci.la.ca.us/gsd/bm/Blg_Form_Gen_113.pdf
An ergonomic evaluation report will outline the evaluation process, the findings, and any recommendations that are made. Electronic copies of the report will be sent in PDF format to the employee, the requesting person (if different than the employee), the supervisor and any other persons identified at the time of the evaluation such as a physician, Department on Disability or American Disability Act coordinator. A copy of the report will be kept on file in the Occupational Safety and Health Division. Employees are encouraged to contact the Occupational Safety and Health Division once all equipment is delivered and installed to schedule a follow-up visit for training in proper use of the equipment and risk factor reduction techniques.

Periodic follow up or outcome surveys will be distributed to maintain the quality of the services provided.

If there are any additional questions or concerns, the Ergonomic Section is available for guidance at (213) 473-3405.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

Employees are encouraged to visit the following sites for additional information on workstation configurations and make an attempt to remediate their situations while waiting for an evaluation. Safety staff and administrators are encouraged to share this information with all employees:

- [http://www.ergonomics.ucla.edu/](http://www.ergonomics.ucla.edu/)
- [http://www.gwu.edu/~riskmgnt/pdf/ergostretch.pdf](http://www.gwu.edu/~riskmgnt/pdf/ergostretch.pdf)

ADDITIONAL SERVICES:

General Trainings:
One-hour training that reviews the general ergonomic principles and provides information so that participants can make basic changes to their workstations and incorporate safe work practices. This training is available for groups/departments of any size. The department is responsible for securing the space for the training and coordinating the meeting with personnel who will be attending.
**Administrative Personnel Trainings:**
Two-hour training designed to educate supervisory staff to common risk behaviors and work environments risk factors. After this session, supervisors will be able to identify and remediate obvious problems and recognize when a request for a formal ergonomic evaluation is necessary. Equipment and ergonomic solutions are covered. The department is responsible for securing the space for the training and coordinating the meeting with personnel who will be attending.

**Safety Professional Trainings:**
Four-hour training designed to educate Safety Professionals with in-depth assessment components including overview of common ergonomic equipment recommendations. Vendor and contractor information for ergonomic services / equipment and navigation through the City procedures is presented. Training space may be coordinated through a main contact person, or the City Occupational Safety and Health Division.

**Screenings/Walk-Through:**
A brief screening / walk through of an area can be conducted. Simple suggestions such as placement of current equipment, education on equipment use, etc. can be performed. No formal recommendations will be made. This service is generally used to determine if complete ergonomic evaluations are necessary.

**DEFINITIONS/GLOSSARY:**

**Administrative Controls:** Changes in the way a job is assigned or scheduled that reduce the magnitude, frequency, or duration of exposure to ergonomic risk factors.

**Ergonomics:** Ergonomics is the science of designing the job, equipment, and workplace to fit the worker. Proper ergonomic design is necessary to prevent repetitive strain injuries, which can develop over time and can lead to long-term disability.

**Neutral Position:** Standing or sitting with body in neutral alignment: head directly balanced over pelvis; hips, knees and ankles at 90 degrees; elbows in at sides, bent at 90 degrees and wrists neutral (straight).

**Repetitive Motion Injuries (RMIs):** Soft-tissue injuries of the musculoskeletal system caused by repetitive tasks, forceful exertions, vibrations, mechanical compression (pressing against hard surfaces), or sustained or awkward positions.

**Risk Factors:** Elements that put the employee at risk for developing permanent injury or disability. Some factors include: repetition, force, pressure, inadequate lighting, awkward, static or extreme positions, and vibration and extreme temperature.