UNLV | BUSINESS AFFAIRS
Risk Management & Safety

Ergonomics Program

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A. Purpose

Ergonomics is the science of fitting the task and tools to the user to maximize productivity while reducing discomfort, fatigue, and the development of musculoskeletal disorders (MSD) over time. Applying sound ergonomic principles can help identify and reduce risks, decrease fatigue and injuries, and improve comfort, productivity, job satisfaction, and overall safety.

B. Scope

(1) This program applies to all UNLV faculty and staff, as well as select NSHE employees, including those working remotely from home (WFH). The program addresses ergonomic needs across various work environments, including offices, shops, laboratories, classrooms, and other university work areas.
(2) The program provides ergonomic assessments, guidance, and recommendations to promote safe, comfortable, and efficient work environments, including support for applicable ADA accommodations.
(3) The program focuses on proper workstation design, equipment use, and work practices to encourage neutral postures and reduce the risk of musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) by identifying and minimizing common ergonomic risk factors:
    a. Repetition: Performing the same movements frequently.
    b. Static or Awkward Postures: Holding the same position for extended periods or working in awkward positions.
    c. Contact Stress: Pressure on body parts from contact with hard surfaces, edges, or equipment.
    d. Force: Physical effort involved in lifting, carrying, pushing, pulling, gripping, or pinching.

C. Definitions

(1) Administrative Controls: workplace policies, procedures, and schedule changes that reduce employee exposure to hazards by altering how people work.
(2) Contact Stress: localized pressure created when hard or sharp surfaces continuously rub or press against sensitive body tissue, which can restrict blood flow, pinch nerves, and damage tendons.
(3) Engineering Controls: Isolate people from the hazard using physical modifications.
(4) Ergonomics: fitting the job to the worker, rather than forcing the worker to fit the job.
(5) Ergonomic Risk Factors: aspects of a job or workplace situations that place biomechanical stress on a worker's body, causing wear and tear that can lead to musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs).
(6) Force: the physical exertion or heavy manual effort required by a worker to perform tasks such as lifting, pushing, pulling, or gripping objects.

(7) Hierarchy of controls: a five-level framework that ranks workplace safety measures from most effective to least effective to protect workers from hazards.
(8) MSD's: Musculoskeletal Disorders; Injuries and disorders of the muscles, nerves, tendons, joints, cartilage, and spinal discs.
(9) OSHA: Occupational Safety and Health Administration is a federal regulatory agency under the US Department of Labor, that ensures safe and healthful working conditions for American workers
(10) PPE: Personal protective equipment, commonly referred to as "PPE", is equipment worn to minimize exposure to hazards that cause serious workplace injuries and illnesses.
(11) Repetition: In context of workplace safety, performing the same motion or series of motions continually or frequently for an extended period of time.
(12) Static/awkward postures/positions: key ergonomic risk factors that force the body away from a comfortable, neutral alignment and lead to musculoskeletal disorders.

D. Regulations

(1) The ergonomics program supports UNLV's alignment with the Occupational Safety & Health Administration's (OSHA) General Duty Clause, Section 5(a)(1).
(2) "Each employer shall furnish to each of his employees' employment and a place of employment which are free from recognized hazards that are causing or are likely to cause death or serious physical harm to his employees." (OSHA, 9)

E. Training

RMS provides general ergonomic training, guidance, and practical recommendations on proper equipment use, workstation adjustments, and body mechanics to help reduce discomfort and prevent injuries. While training may not address every individual work situation, it provides employees with foundational knowledge and practical tools they can apply to their work environments.

(1) Training may be provided through written materials, presentations, training videos, informal workstation observations, and ergonomic assessments.
(2) Online ergonomics training and self-assessments are available through RMS's current learning management system.

F. Roles and Responsibilities

(1) Risk Management and Safety (RMS) – Ergonomics

(a) Develops, implements and monitors safety and risk reduction programs and procedures to protect staff, students, visitors and the university from injury and/or financial loss.

(b) The Ergonomics Specialist (ES) evaluates work environments, identifies physical strain hazards, and implements customized interventions to prevent musculoskeletal disorders.
(c) Provides recommendations on ergonomic equipment, minimizing risk and injury prevention.
(d) Provides ergonomic training to employees as needed.
(e) Manages and coordinates the UNLV Ergonomics Program, conducting annual evaluations to ensure continuous effectiveness and updates.

(2) Supervisors, managers, and directors

(a) Have written and clear work place procedures.
(b) Provide employee training, proper tools, and PPE.
(c) Department leaders are encouraged to track injury metrics and maintain a targeted action plan for risk reduction and injuries.
(d) Encourage employees to report all potential and known risks.
(e) Support employees with ergonomic assessment requests.
(f) Provide employee training, proper tools, and appropriate PPE as necessary.
(g) Become familiar with the hierarchy of controls framework for hazard control methods.
(h) Utilize administrative controls such as task rotation to limit individual employee exposure to identified ergonomic hazards, fatigue, or repetitive strain injury.
(i) Whenever possible, use engineering controls like mechanical lifts, anti-vibration tools, monitor arms, and supportive seating to reduce physical strain and hazards.
(j) Provide a place of employment free from recognized hazards as required by the OSHA General Duty Clause.

(3) Employees

(a) Inform leadership of any discomfort, pain, or injury related to use of equipment, furniture, tools, or performing tasks.
(b) Know how to properly use equipment and/or make adjustments when appropriate.
(c) Adhere to established policies, procedures, and training to maintain safe and proper work practices.
(d) Request additional training when needed.
(e) Speak with your direct manager or supervisor to request an ergonomic assessment through RMS. ***To request an ergonomic assessment, see section G.***

G. The Ergonomic Assessment Process

(1) Identifying the need for an assessment

(a) The employee is experiencing discomfort or has concerns about their workstation setup, chair, and/or equipment.
(b) The employee is interested in learning more about ergonomic practices for safe work and injury prevention.

(2) Requesting an ergonomic assessment for UNLV Employees
(a) Notify your supervisor/manager of any ergonomic/workstation concerns and request an ergonomic assessment.
(b) **Employees with desk jobs will be required to complete the ergonomic self-assessment**, and make any necessary adjustments to their workstation, as presented in the assessment module. Use the link below to access the RMS Ergonomic Training and Online Workspace Self-Assessment available in the Chimera Safety Platform. Please send a copy of your completed report to ergonomics-group@unlv.edu. If an in-person assessment is needed, please complete the Ergonomic Assessment Request form below. **Supervisor approval is not required to complete the self-assessment training.**

(3) Human Resources ADA Accommodations
(a) Please note that RMS requires departmental approval from the requesting employee's supervisor to conduct a workstation assessment, as it may involve modifications to the employee's work area. If an employee is unable to obtain department approval but believes they may qualify for a workstation modification as part of a reasonable accommodation under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), they are encouraged to complete the Workplace ADA Accommodation Request Form available on the Human Resources website.

(4) For non-UNLV or NSHE affiliated employees
(a) Follow your employer's established ergonomics program and coordinate directly with your supervisor to request an ergonomic assessment through the UNLV Risk Management and Safety - Ergonomics department.
(b) NSHE affiliates not currently covered under other programs, contact the UNLV Risk Management and Safety Ergonomics Department to request an ergonomic assessment.

(5) What to expect during an assessment
(a) Ergonomics for office evaluation/observation:
(i.) Basic ergonomic questions will be asked about the employee's concerns which prompted the assessment request.
(ii.) The assessment consists of an observation of the office environment, specifically examining the arrangement of equipment, the employee's posture and interaction with their chair, workstation, telephone, keyboard, and mouse to identify ergonomic risk factors.
(b) Ergonomics for work from home evaluations:

(i.) Basic ergonomic questions will be asked about the employee's concerns which prompted the assessment request.
(ii.) The assessment consists of an observation of the work environment, specifically examining the arrangement of equipment, the employee's posture and interaction with their chair, workstation, telephone, keyboard, and mouse to identify ergonomic risk factors.
(iii.) The employee may be asked to send photos of their workstation and equipment, demonstrating their sitting posture and the furniture/equipment setup.

(c) Time frame for the initial ergonomic evaluation: 30-60 minutes (Same for WFH)
(d) Report: (Same for WFH)
(i.) Provides the identified ergonomic risk factors observed during the evaluation, and recommendations to mitigate or eliminate those risks, and equipment recommendations.
(ii.) Assessment reports are completed within 2-5 business days and provided via email to the employee and supervisor for review of recommendations.
(iii.) *Please note that some departments follow a different process for furniture and report delivery. If this applies to your department, continue following your established procedure.
(e) Recordkeeping
(f) UNLV RMS will maintain all records of workstation assessments and training.

(6) Ergonomics for industrial settings
(a) The objective is to help employees work safer at work by using ergonomic assessments to gather information and help with individually tailored training for the trades/industrial workers on campus when needed. This standard ergonomic process covers general trade and industrial roles across applicable areas of the campus.
(b) If employees or management would like to have an ergonomic consultation, assessment or training, please complete the Ergonomic Assessment Request Form. ***Employees will need to inform their direct leadership about ergonomic assessment requests.***
(c) The Ergonomics Specialist (ES) and the UNLV Safety Team will:
(i.) Collect data on previous injuries and the types of injuries in the relevant area and job.
(ii.) Observe the area and the employee working. ***During the evaluation, photographs and/or video recordings of the employee performing typical job tasks may be captured for analysis.***
(iii.) Speak with employees and managers to gain more information about the processes, issues, risks and solutions.

(iv.) Identify the risk factors which are easy to address, manageable risks and mitigation without major budget or operational changes.
(v.) Evaluate the identified risks and score them using the risk analysis tools (RULA, REBA).
(vi.) Implement practical solutions to mitigate risks.
(vii.) Track implementation progress and re-evaluate the process.
(viii.) Assess ergonomic risks periodically.

(7) Follow-up and support
(a) Follow-up assessments will usually be conducted in 30 days from the initial assessment, unless no changes have been made to the workstation in that time frame. The follow-up will then be conducted at 60 days or later.
(b) For support please email ergonomics-group@unlv.edu or call 702-895-4226.

H. Purchasing Office Furniture and Workspace Modifications

Recommendations may be made to obtain furniture or equipment. There are no particular brands of equipment/products or furniture that are endorsed. Purchases are at your department's discretion and must follow established purchasing guidelines and approvals.

(1) If a replacement chair is recommended, RMS partners with Planning and Construction (P&C) to allow employees to 'test' chairs prior to purchase. The chairs meet the P&C guidelines for furniture specifications. To request the chair sit test, the employee will schedule with the RMS Ergonomics Specialist (ES).
(2) If a chair is selected, the RMS ES will obtain chair specifications from P&C, and request a quote from the P&C approved furniture vendor. Once the chair quote is received, it will be sent to the employee and their supervisor.
(3) If the purchase is approved, their department will follow their standard procurement process to purchase the chair. The vendor will coordinate with the department for chair delivery and set up.
(4) If an employee is unable to obtain department approval, but believes they may qualify for a workstation modification as part of a reasonable accommodation under the American Disabilities Act (ADA), they are encouraged to complete the Workplace ADA Accommodation Request Form available on the Human Resources website.
(5) For general guidelines for public and non-public facing spaces, please refer to the Planning and Construction website.
(6) With approval from your department leadership, submit a request through the Planning and Construction work order portal. The P&C interior design team can help you find UNLV-approved options that fit your space. Furniture procured through P&C also carries a minimum 10-year product warranty.

(7) If you need specific furniture or equipment because of a medical condition or disability, please submit an accommodation request through the UNLV ADA office or request an ergonomic evaluation.
(8) RMS collaborates with Planning & Construction (P&C) on adjustable-height desks. In some cases, your current desk can be modified. P&C can determine if a modification is possible based on review. After reviewing this report, please contact RMS if you would like to proceed with this recommendation.
(9) For all other modifications to the office space, including moving hutches above the desks, please contact P&C.

I. References

(1) Occupational Health and Safety Administration (OSHA) OSH Act of 1970
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