Ergonomic and Human Factors Task Force

Injuries as a result of outdated work stations or processes represent the greatest threat to insuring ergonomic or soft tissue injuries. By bringing together key personnel, effective and oftentimes inexpensive, solutions can be used to prevent most injuries. This list of key elements of an ergonomic and human factors task force is designed to help you control loss through both proactive and reactive strategies.

Task Force Composition
An ergonomic and human factors task force is typically comprised of the following members: representatives of top management who signify corporate commitment; health, safety and human resource personnel; departmental supervisors and line managers; employee representatives; and personnel representing sales/marketing, maintenance, purchasing, product design, quality control and/or other related areas.

Task Force Purposes
The task force should provide the following direction:
- Establish goals and objectives
- Develop policies and procedures
- Allocate funding and resources
- Determine task assignments
- Establish effective accountability
- Develop multi-layer commitment to employee involvement

Pre-Loss Activity
Before a loss occurs, the task force will attempt to identify potential stressors in the work environment through the following steps:
- Monitor workforce comfort levels through interviews, questionnaires, turnover, absenteeism, reductions in product quality, rework and scrap levels or disciplinary action;
- Analyze all planned, modified, or new changes affecting processes, materials, products and equipment;
- Analyze all tasks with attention to static postures, vibration, tools, lighting, frequency, force, duration or direct mechanical compression;
- Identify all tasks which would reduce stressors to accommodate early intervention and/or facilitate injured employees’ early return to work; and
- Analyze the associated effects of piece work, overtime or an increase in production demands on worker comfort.

The task force will also involve employees by doing the following:
- Encourage employees to notify management of conditions which might present problems;
- Train employees in basic ergonomic principles;
- Rotate employees to reduce loss exposure;
- Inform employees about treatment protocol and the importance of early intervention/identify stressors, with attention toward employee control, hand postures, tool selection, etc.;
- Identify occupational and nonoccupational risk factors; and
- Measure human performance
Finally, the task force will assess the viability of administrative controls designed to reduce frequency and severity of accidents. Controls which can be considered include: breaks, rotation, work hardening, employee selection, flex-time, and/or task enlargement.

**Post-Loss Activity**

After an injury the task force should:

- Facilitate early detection and notification to allow early intervention, task modification and/or exposure reduction.
- Monitor medical and claims administration, focusing on reporting sequence, task force notification and the predetermination of light-duty tasks.