Construction and Ergonomics

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Oh no, not the “E” word again!

Let’s start with the economics. Musculoskeletal injuries account for over one third of all lost workdays, and about half of all workers’ compensation claims in the construction industry. In 2006 there were over 29,000 musculoskeletal injuries according to U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. The average cost per claim is $9,240 (CNA2000), and, according to the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), one quarter of those claims resulted in temporary or permanent disability. Additionally, seven out of 10 construction workers from 13 trades reported back pain, and nearly one third went to the doctor for it (Cook et al., 1996). Chances are some of your employees may be experiencing back pain too.

Now, on to ergonomics! Really, ergonomics is not such a bad word; it just has a bad rap. Basically, ergonomics is concerned with how individuals are able to work within their environment. There are five aspects of ergonomics: safety, comfort, ease of use, productivity/performance, and aesthetics. Ergonomic changes can often be simple and inexpensive. NIOSH has published *Simple Solutions: Ergonomics for Construction Workers*, and you can view it online, www.cdc.gov/niosh/docs/2007-122/.

American National Standards Institute (ANSI) has prepared the standard A10.40 Reduction of Musculoskeletal Problems in Construction and Demolition, and the final appeals against A10.40 have been dismissed. These ANSI standards are a guideline designed to help reduce musculoskeletal injuries in the construction industry and are not intended for enforcement by government agencies. The ANSI standard defines risk factors such as force, awkward posture, repetition, and non-occupational risk factors, among others. Within A10.40 are criteria for identifying risk, possible solutions and implementations, training of hazards and solutions, encouraging employee involvement, injury management, web references, and checklists

For a summary of ANSI A10.40 please refer to www.lhsfna.org. To purchase a copy of the ANSI A10.40 please visit http://webstore.ansi.org/.

Through planning, properly designed tools and equipment, training, employee involvement, and management, ergonomics can help reduce musculoskeletal injuries and create a safer workplace. Please contact your AGC safety and loss control consultant for assistance or more information.