

TOOLBOX TALK #13

CREATE AN ERGONOMIC WORK ENVIRONMENT

Does your job require you to stand for long periods? Or maybe you spend hours lifting and pushing heavy materials. Perhaps you're in a piece of equipment where you have to sit all day.

These situations are all considered risk factors for musculoskeletal disorders (MSD). According to the National Safety Council (NSC), musculoskeletal disorders are injuries or disorders of the muscles, nerves, tendons, joints, cartilage and spinal discs. They are disorders that affect the body's movements.

If you are experiencing symptoms of an MSD, including numbness in the hands or fingers, tingling in your legs, pain, and more, it's time to perform an ergonomic evaluation of your work environment, the equipment/tools you use, and your job tasks. Look for awkward postures, too much sitting or standing in one position, repetitive motion and exposure to heat. Cold and vibration.

After you identify your area's risk factors, work with your supervisor to come up with improvements. Some suggestions from the NSC:

- Take stretch breaks.
- Alternate repetitive tasks with non-repetitive at regular intervals, and take frequent breaks.
- Place your more frequently used tools and materials within easy reach.
- Alternate between tasks that use different muscle groups – if you have to manually stack items, try to switch it up with some sedentary tasks.

