

TOOLBOX TALK #9

UNDERSTANDING ERGONOMIC RISKS

Construction tasks often require manual lifting, awkward postures, forceful exertions and similar body movements known to be risk factors for developing musculoskeletal Disorders (MSDs). The American National Standards Institute (ANSI) section on “Reduction of Musculoskeletal Problems in Construction”, contains a wide range of guidance on identifying and eliminating MSD risks in construction. For example, one informational appendix provides a checklist that safety professionals can use when assessing material handling on a job site.

Pre-job Planning Is Essential

- What materials will be used?
- Which materials are heavy, or large and awkward (more than 3 feet wide)?
- Which materials can be moved mechanically?
- Are the right carts/dollies readily available and in good condition?
- Which materials have to be moved by hand?
 - Which require more than one worker?
 - Do they have handles or are there carrying tools to make it easier?

Materials Storage On Site

- Can materials be ordered with proper planning to minimize storage?
- Where will they be stored?
- How will they be stored?
- Can we store them off the ground to make them easy to retrieve?
- Who will make sure they are delivered to the right place?

Moving Materials On Site

- How will materials be transported to their final use destination?
- Are there clear and level pathways to do this? Can carts, wheelbarrows, dollies or similar devices be used?
- Will material handling equipment be used to move materials?
- How can we make sure they are moved once and not multiple times?



Another appendix provides an MSD problem reduction checklist that safety professionals can use to evaluate concerns such as tool use, repetitive motion and standing.