Ergonomics toolbox talk

29 CFR 1904.35, 1926.21

Date _____ Trainer _____ Location _____

Opening question

What part of your body hurts at the end of a long shift, and which task do you think causes it?

Why it matters

Strain injuries often build up over time instead of coming from one big accident. The same awkward reach, heavy lift or vibrating tool, day after day, wears on muscles, tendons and joints. Early signs are easy to ignore, but working through them can turn soreness into an injury that keeps you off the job. Ergonomics means fitting the work to the worker so your body lasts a full career.

Key points

1. **Know what wears your body down**
   Watch for the risk factors: heavy force, awkward positions, the same motion over and over, vibration, pressure from hard edges, and holding one position too long. The more of these a task has, and the longer you do it, the higher the risk. Look at your own work today and pick out the worst task.

2. **Work in the power zone**
   Keep work between your shoulders and knees, close to your body. Raise low work on a bench or sawhorses, and use a platform or lift so you are not reaching overhead or bending your neck back for long stretches. Turn with your feet instead of twisting your back. For heavy or awkward loads, use a cart, a hoist or a second person.

3. **Go easy on your hands, wrists and arms**
   Use tools that fit your hand and let you keep your wrist straight. Dull blades and worn bits make you push harder, so replace them. With vibrating tools, use anti-vibration models or handles when they are available, grip no tighter than you need, keep your hands warm and take breaks. Let the tool do the work.

4. **Change it up and slow down**
   Rotate tasks when you can, switch hands or sides, and take short breaks to stretch and change position. Use knee pads or a kneeling mat on hard surfaces. When people rush, they tend to lift alone, skip the cart or twist instead of stepping, so plan a realistic pace with the crew.

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5 **Report aches early**

Pain, tingling, numbness, swelling or stiffness that keeps coming back is an early warning. Tell your supervisor early, while the fix may be as simple as a new setup or a better tool. OSHA's recordkeeping rule requires employers to have a reasonable way for workers to report work-related injuries and illnesses, and employers may not fire or discriminate against a worker for reporting (29 CFR 1904.35(b)(1)(iv)).

29 CFR 1904.35(b)(1)

Scenario

Picture this: a worker spends most of the day fastening ceiling board overhead. He holds the screw gun with a bent wrist, keeps his arms above his head for hours, and skips breaks to finish the floor. By the end of the week his shoulder aches and two fingers feel numb, but he figures it will pass. What could he and the crew change about the job, and what should he do about the numbness?

Crew discussion

1. Which task on this job leaves you the most sore at the end of the day?
2. What could we change about that task: the height, the tool, the weight, or how long one person does it?
3. What early signs would make you report a problem?
4. How do we report aches and pains here, and who do you tell?

Bottom line **Fit the work to your body, change positions often, and report aches early before they turn into injuries.**

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Sign-in sheet / Hoja de asistencia

Topic / Tema Ergonomics / Ergonomía

Date / Fecha _____

Trainer / Instructor _____ Location / Lugar _____ Company / Empresa _____

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