7 MINUTE Safety Trainer

Computer Workstation Exercises

HANDOUT 910

B-1E

Computer work may not seem hazardous, but awkward positions and repetitive motions can cause painful injuries.

- Eyes may feel dry and uncomfortable after hours spent looking at a computer screen.
- Hands and wrists may have a number of symptoms, including swelling, tingling, numbness, burning sensation, or loss of strength or coordination.
- Shoulders, back, neck, arms, legs, feet, and toes may all have pain, stiffness, or loss of mobility.

Even very short breaks will help to minimize the effects of sitting for hours working at the computer.

- **Eye breaks:** Every 15 minutes look away from the monitor and focus on something at a distance of about 20 feet for a minute or so.
  - Also, blink rapidly for a few seconds to moisten the eye's surface.
- **Minibreaks:** Between bursts of typing or mousing, allow your hands to relax in a flat and straight posture for several seconds.
- **Rest breaks:** Take a short rest break every 30 to 60 minutes.
  - Leave your computer workstation for a minute or so.

Make exercises that focus on different areas of the body a regular part of your daily routine.

- **Hand stretches:** Make a fist, then extend and spread your fingers.
  - Hold each position for several seconds and then allow your hands and fingers to relax.
- **Wrist and forearm stretches:** Lace your fingers and, with elbows pointed out, straighten your arms until you feel the stretch—then relax.
- **Shoulder stretches:** Move your arms back to bring your shoulder blades together—then, reach your arms overhead and stretch.
- **Neck stretches:** Rotate your head up and down; turn your head from side to side—then, tilt your head toward each shoulder.
- **Back stretches:** Bend forward in your chair and touch the floor.
  - Grasp your shin or knee and pull your knee toward your chest (do this while sitting).
  - Stand up, place your hands on your hips, and bend backwards.

One of the best ways to reduce your exposure to musculoskeletal disorder (MSD) risk factors is to adjust your work space or workstation to fit your body.

- An ergonomic chair should have a comfortable and wide seat, and the height should allow your feet to rest flat on the floor.
- The computer monitor should be placed directly in front of you, and you should not have to tilt your head up or bend your neck down to see it.
- Frequently used work items should be within easy reach so you can avoid awkward postures or excessive stretching.

Your supervisor may be able to suggest ways to make your job or workstation more friendly to your body.

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