Ergonomics and Repetitive Motion Policy

R.W. LaPine Inc.
MECHANICAL CONTRACTORS

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PURPOSE:

Many injuries in the construction sector are musculoskeletal disorders caused by cumulative trauma, commonly known as cumulative trauma disorders (CTDs). Back injuries, tendinitis and carpal tunnel syndrome are examples of common CTDs. This policy is established by R.W. LaPine, Inc. to help reduce workplace risk factors for CTDs such as repetitive motions, high forces, awkward postures and vibration exposure. CTDs in the construction industry can be associated with such activities as manual material handling, hand tool usage, awkward postures and prolonged equipment operation.

POLICY STATEMENT:

R.W. LaPine, Inc believes treating ergonomic efforts as furthering the organizations goal of maintaining and preserving a safe and healthy work environment for all employees.

It is expected that full cooperation of the total work force in working together toward realizing ergonomic improvements.

Ergonomic efforts are a priority along with other cost reduction, productivity and quality assurance activities.

EMPLOYEE INVOLVEMENT:

R.W. LaPine, Inc promotes worker involvement in efforts to improve workplace condition is a critical element to an ergonomic process. This effort is accomplished by training workers to recognize and understand ergonomic and repetitive motion hazards. Further, train workers in ways to prevent or reduce the likelihood of such injuries.

TRAINING:

Training is an essential element for R.W. LaPine, Inc ergonomic and repetitive motion policy to effective.

All employees will be trained to:

- Recognize workplace risk factors for CTDs and understand general methods for controlling them.
- Identify the signs and symptoms of CTDs that may result from exposure to such risk factors and be familiar with the organization's health-care procedures.
- Understand the employee's role in the process and ways employee's can actively participate.

ERGONOMIC BEST PRACTICES:

Manual materials handling:

The construction environment is often labor intensive and involves the manual handling of materials. These materials can include bricks, block, lumber, bags of cement, etc. Often the items are bulky, and employees must carry them over rough terrain. Not only are slips and falls prevalent, but manual materials handling can place large forces on the spine and is associated with back and shoulder injuries.

Best practice:

The forces on the spine and, hence, the risk of injury can be greatly reduced by mechanizing the manual material handling tasks. Rough terrain forklifts can move pallets of material from trucks to the area where the items are needed. Roll carts are another means to reduce manual handling of material.

Scaffolding in masonry:

When laying brick or block, scaffolding is used to provide access to the face of the structure. When laying block toward the bottom of the scaffolding, the mason must flex the trunk to reach. Frequent and prolonged trunk flexion is associated with low back pain. When laying block above shoulder level, raising the arms is prevalent. This posture is associated with should disorders. Also, when adjusting the scaffolding level, lifting heavy planks is required. This task requires bending and twisting, coupled with heavy, awkward loads, all risk factors for low back pain.

Best practice:

The use of adjustable scaffolding provides for a continuous height adjustment. This adjustment allows the masons to lay block at about waist level, thus minimizing the awkward trunk postures associated with back pain. Furthermore, after the initial setup, the planks do not have to be moved, so the task of manually moving planks to adjust the scaffolding levels has been eliminated, as have the associated risk factors.

Manual landscaping tasks:

Tasks such as digging, lifting, grading and carrying earth materials are prevalent in construction. These tasks often involve heavy manual labor, including using hand tools, hauling wheelbarrows full of dirt and rock, and digging post holes. These activities can place relatively large forces on the hands, shoulders and back. These forces, especially when experienced repetitively, contribute to CTDs.

Best practices:

Skid steers can eliminate the need to manually perform many landscaping and earth working tasks. Attachments are available for grading, digging holes and ditches, hauling dirt, and transferring pallets of materials. These machines eliminate many accompanying risk factors, such as repetitive loading on the hands, shoulders and back.

In addition to the above listed tasks and best practices, if mechanical means can not be used to perform the task the following steps shall be taken:

- When lifting bend at the knees.
- Utilize a co-worker to help lift heavy or bulky loads
- When moving a cart manually, push when ever possible rather than pulling the cart.
- Prior to starting a manually intensive task, take time to stretch your back, arms and legs.
- When using vibrate equipment take turns with co-workers to reduce the amount of time of exposure.
- Wear gloves to protect your hands from sharps, cuts, and vibration.