

### Risk Management Environmental Health & Safety

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### Why Ergonomics Matters

Poor ergonomics can lead to a variety of health issues, including repetitive strain injuries, chronic back and neck pain, and carpal tunnel syndrome. These conditions not only affect individual wellbeing but also contribute to decreased productivity, increased absenteeism, and higher healthcare costs. In addition, good, basic ergonomic practices can:

- Prevent workplace injuries and discomfort
- Improve employee focus and performance
- Reduce fatigue and absenteeism
- Enhance morale and job satisfaction

### Best Practices for Ergonomic Workstations

Creating an ergonomic workplace involves thoughtful setup and regular adjustments. Here are key recommendations:

- **Chair:** Use an adjustable chair with lumbar support. Feet should rest flat on the floor or on a footrest.
- **Monitor:** Position the top of the screen at or slightly below eye level, about an arm's length away.
- **Keyboard and Mouse:** Keep wrists straight and elbows at a 90-degree angle, with arms close to the body.
- **Desk Items:** Place frequently used items within easy reach to avoid overextension.

More ergonomics discussion next month.

### 2 Eye Protection

Just as we cannot forget to protect our skin with sunscreen, we cannot overlook the damage sun can do to our eyes.

The hazard comes from over exposure to UV radiation, which damages the eye's surface tissue,

cornea, and lens. Some of the damage may not reveal itself until years later and cause eye diseases and problems:

- Cataracts
- Certain eye and eyelid cancers
- Growths on the eye, such as pterygium
- A form of photokeratitis, also known as snow blindness, can develop after exposure to UV reflections from snow, ice, or water.

UV levels are generally higher in summer, but significant exposure occurs year-round and can be intensified by reflection from surfaces like water and sand. Clouds do not block UV light, so precautions should be taken regardless of the conditions outside:

- Choose sunglasses that offer 100% UV or UV400 protection, or block both UV-A and UV-B rays.
- Wear a broad-brimmed hat along with the sunglasses.

Other factors to consider include:

- Sunlight is strongest midday to early afternoon, at higher altitudes, and when reflected off water, sand, pavement, ice, or snow.
- Never look directly at the sun, including during an eclipse. This can damage the eye's retina and cause an injury known as solar retinopathy.
- Tanning beds pose the same risks to the eyes and body as outdoor UV light.

### 3 Office Clutter

Cluttered workspaces are more than just an inconvenience – they're a safety risk. In offices, piles of papers, cords, and equipment can create trip hazards, block emergency exits, and slow evacuation during an emergency.

## 1 General Ergonomics

**Ergonomics** is the science of designing work environments, tools, and tasks to fit the physical needs and capabilities of workers. It aims to reduce strain, fatigue, and injury while improving comfort, efficiency, and productivity. By aligning the workplace with human anatomy and movement, ergonomics helps prevent musculoskeletal disorders and supports long-term health.

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Keep desks, walkways and doorways clear at all times. Store materials properly, manage cords safely, and avoid stacking items in unstable ways. A tidy office supports not only productivity but also a safer campus for everyone.

