

Contributors



Sarah Ripplinger

Sarah is a marketer, writer, editor, and journalist. She brings us two stories this issue: our cover story on reducing manufacturing injuries (page 7) and a story about making a recovery-at-work program that really works (page 11).



Jesse Marchand

Jesse is the managing editor of *WorkSafe Magazine* and has been working in publishing and journalism for 18 years. She speaks with WorkSafeBC's Tami Perkins about ergonomics in "Ask an officer" (right) and talks to an audiologist about hearing loss (page 16).



Marnie Douglas

Marnie is a Kelowna-based writer and communications professional who began her career in journalism. She writes about tree planting and physical distancing at camp during a pandemic (page 22).



Gord Woodward

Gord has run his own communications and business-consulting firm for 24 years. He speaks with a pulp mill about how they reduced injuries with a simple change (page 19).

Ask an officer

Implementing ergonomics



Tami Perkins
Ergonomist

Region: Richmond
Years on the job: 20

In this issue, we speak with WorkSafeBC ergonomist Tami Perkins about the basics of ergonomics in the workplace. WorkSafeBC ergonomists visit workplaces and consult with and educate employers and workers on how to prevent injuries by looking at gaps and deficiencies in work systems.

Q. What is ergonomics?

A. The goal of ergonomics is to optimize system performance, reduce the risk for injury, and make it easy for people to do the right thing. It's all about designing a work task to fit the worker, making the work safer and more efficient.

The way a workplace is set up, how the process is designed, and the tools and machinery used, all contribute to the success of your business, and to the reduction of injury.

Q. How will knowing about ergonomics benefit me?

A. Improving the fit between the worker and their system of work has been shown to:

- Produce a safer work environment
- Reduce worker injuries and time off
- Increase efficiencies and productivity
- Reduce errors
- Increase job satisfaction and morale
- Improve safety culture

Q. Where do I start with workplace ergonomics?

A. The best time to incorporate ergonomics is at the start: when you are designing, planning, and procuring your workplace facilities, workstations, equipment, processes, and workflow.

If your workplace is already up and running and you want to make improvements, then start by identifying areas of concern. These may be areas where you are seeing issues with quality, production, or efficiency; anywhere you are seeing errors or injuries; or any time you receive reports of pain or frustration from workers.

No matter where you are at in your business, a participatory approach is a key to success. Management will need to support the effort and you'll need to engage people from across the organization including workers from maintenance, engineering, purchasing, and safety.

Q. What would an ergonomist look for at my workplace?

A. The lens of the ergonomist considers how the design and layout of the workplace, tools and equipment, workflow, and environment will affect how work is performed.

When I visit a worksite, I look at how all elements of the system may impact workers. I never look at just one worker in isolation, but at all the factors that influence how work is performed. For example, if I'm attending a manufacturing facility, I look at how a product moves through the facility, considering workflow, work design, and points of interaction with the product, such as inspecting and receiving.

If injuries or errors occur while workers are using equipment in the facility, ergonomists may ask questions such as:

- Is the equipment intuitive? Are the dials, knobs, or controls consistent with expectations?
- Are there design issues that produce frequent errors?

- Is it easy to tell when errors are made so they can be corrected before an adverse outcome occurs?
- Does the design of the equipment produce awkward postures?
- Are there work processes that require repeat handling or unnecessary carrying?
- Are there frequent or heavy lifting activities involved with using the equipment?

Equipment is just one aspect of the workplace system influencing worker performance, so I would also ask questions about workplace elements such as workflow and processes, time allocation, resources, supervision, procedures, maintenance, and more.

Q. Where can I get more information?

A. WorkSafeBC is a co-sponsor of the 2021 International Ergonomics Association (IEA) Conference in June in Vancouver, B.C. This year the conference theme is Human Factors and Ergonomics (HFE) in the Connected World. It will speak to the role of emerging G5 wireless technologies and how we interact with them, as well as feature theme-related sessions covering the full breadth of traditional and emerging HFE topics and applications. Find out more about the conference at iea2021.org.

For more information on workplace ergonomics visit worksafebc.com/ergonomics.

Looking for answers to your specific health and safety questions? Send them to us at worksafemagazine@worksafebc.com, and we'll consider them for our next "Ask an officer" feature. ☺

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