

TST #147-A

## Ergonomics for the Construction Worker

Most of us have heard of ergonomics, usually in reference to computer operators or production line employees. Ergonomics is defined as the study of the design and arrangement of tools and equipment so that people will interact in a healthy, comfortable and efficient manner.

More simply put, ergonomics means having an environment that has been designed or adjusted to fit you as an employee regardless of your job. An example of ergonomic design used in everyday life is the design of the driver's compartment of a car or truck. The pedals are positioned so that your feet can easily reach and operate them; the steering wheel is at chest height where it can be turned comfortably, control switches for lights, audio player and the temperature controls are all located where they can be reached conveniently by the driver.

There are many things that can be done on work sites to help make the job fit the operator. When trying to improve the ergonomics of a particular work environment, it is important to think about things that you can do to reduce the number of potentially harmful situations encountered such as awkward postures, repetitive movements, vibration, lifting heavy or large items, pushing, pulling or grasping.

Consider the following when trying to make your work safer, faster and easier.

- Take a few minutes to decide the best location for equipment before you begin working.
- If you need items from another truck, move the truck as close as possible to where you will need the items and then unload them. Don't waste energy and risk injury by carrying heavy items farther than necessary.
- Make sure work platforms are level so that you will be able to maintain normal balance when operating equipment.
- Change working or standing positions from time to time. Move your head from side to side during an operation so that your neck muscles don't get locked into a position.
- If it is necessary to lift heavy items by hand, make sure you bend at the knees (don't lock the knees) and leverage the weight so that you don't put too much strain on your back.
- Get help for lifting extra-heavy equipment.

By taking the time to properly plan the job site you can make your work easier and safer, without slowing down production. Why not take a few minutes today to look at your job site and identify any modifications that should be made.

# Ergonomics Quiz

The following statements should be answered with “True” or “False.” Answers below.

1. Ergonomics is mainly concerned with factory production line workers.
2. There is very little you can do to change the ergonomics of your workplace.
3. The driver’s compartment in a car or truck is a good example of well-designed ergonomics.
4. Ergonomics involves reducing potentially harmful situations such as awkward postures, repetitive movements, vibration, pushing, pulling or grasping, and lifting heavy or large items.
5. Never carry heavy items farther than you have to. Move the truck closer to where you are working.

**Employee Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Answers:**

1. False
2. False
3. True
4. True
5. True