

Ergonomics

What is the purpose?

The aim of ergonomics is to:

- reduce the potential for accidents;
- reduce the potential for injury and ill health; and
- improve performance and productivity.

Improved Working Methods

Where risk assessment (see risk assessment guidance note in document library) has identified hazards arising from the way people interact with each other and their working environment, control measures should be devised to eliminate or minimise each risk, taking the individual as the centre point.

It is essential that the results of the necessary changes should be monitored to ensure that in controlling one hazard another has not been created e.g. use of the computer 'mouse' was introduced to reduce keyboarding - but a new set of problems are associated with reaching, gripping and manipulating the mouse.

The following factors need to be considered when assessing ergonomic risks:

- Organisational factors – safety culture, levels of supervision, communication, staffing levels etc.
- Job/equipment factors – control panels, manual handling, job design etc
- Individual factors – physical/mental ability, physical differences etc

Ergonomics can significantly reduce the likelihood of accidents occurring. In the design of control panels the following should be considered:

- the location of switches and buttons (prevent accidental pressing)
- expectations of signals and controls (e.g. green light means safe not dangerous)

Ergonomics is an important tool in reducing ill health at work, such as aches and pains of the wrists, shoulders and back. Workstation arrangements set out on ergonomic principles will help ensure the user remains fit to work.

For further details see the guidance on Display Screen Equipment in the document library, and the Ergonomics Checklist in the document library.