Safety Matters

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WORKING FROM HOME ERGONOMIC TIPS

Working from home comes with its own set of challenges. If an employee finds themselves working from home for a prolonged period of time, it is especially important to take steps to prevent ergonomic injuries. Taking small steps can go a long way to injury prevention at home.

Healthy at Home

Ergonomics is defined as the science of fitting a workspace to an individual's needs. Ergonomics aims to increase efficiency and productivity while reducing discomfort and the likelihood of injury.

Many factors of ergonomics may be taken for granted in the workplace and be severely lacking in a home environment. For example, while at the office, you likely have access to a suitable desk and chair, but when you work from home, you might not have an ideal setup.

Poor ergonomics can lead to not only reduced employee efficiency, but also a number of health issues that may have long-lasting effects, including damage to muscles, nerves, blood vessels, ligaments and tendons. Musculoskeletal disorders can be caused by a wide variety of tasks, many of which may seem innocent, such as sitting with poor posture or having to bend or reach repeatedly.

Workstation Considerations

In order to make your home a suitable work environment, there are a number of factors that you should consider for your workspace, including your:

- Chair – A sturdy chair that supports the curvature of the spine is ideal for working. Chairs should also allow for adjustments so that your feet can rest flat on the floor and your thighs are parallel to it. While typing, your arms should be parallel to the floor as well.
- Desk – Use a work surface, such as a desk or table, that has space underneath for your legs and feet. If a work surface is too low, adjust your chair accordingly. The situation may also be able to be corrected using sturdy supports to boost the legs of either the work surface or the chair. Cushion your wrists from the surface edge with padding or a wrist rest.
- Screen – Arrange your laptop or monitor screen directly in front of you and approximately an arm's length away with the top of the screen at, or slightly below, eye level.
- Layout – Organize files and materials so that you don't have to constantly bend and strain to reach them.
- Equipment – When using a keyboard and mouse, keep them on the same surface. Position your arms so that your hands are aligned with, or slightly below, your elbows. Make sure your wrists are straight and your upper arms stay close to your body. If you use the phone frequently, put it on speaker or use a headset in order to avoid having to cradle the phone between your head and shoulder.

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WORKING FROM HOME ERGONOMIC TIPS (continued)

Preventing Hazards

In addition to arranging your workspace properly, you should also be aware of new risk factors that may be present. Be careful not to overload electrical outlets or create tripping hazards with power strips or extension cords running across the floor of your home.

Taking Breaks

Even while at the office, employees shouldn't spend eight straight hours sitting at their desks. This applies to working at home as well. Take regular breaks to stand, stretch and move around a bit.

In Conclusion

Working from home has its pros and cons. While your home may not be the ideal work environment, utilizing the strategies in this article can go a long way toward preventing unnecessary injuries.

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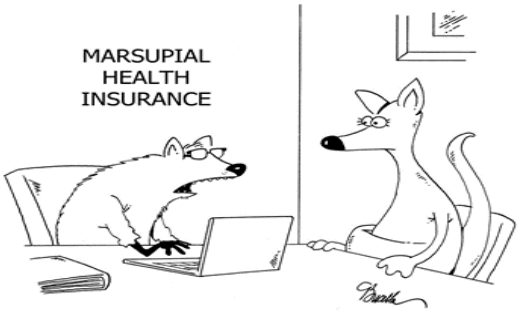

"The premiums are low, but the out-of-pocket expenses..."

MARCH RIDDLES

1. What month do all soldiers hate?
2. What is seen in the middle of March and April that can't be seen at either the beginning or end of either month?
3. Why did the Mom call pest control?
4. What do you get when you cross poison ivy with a 4 leaf clover?
5. Why are oak trees so forgiving?

ANSWERS ON PAGE 2

BLOODBORNE PATHOGEN AWARENESS

While bloodborne pathogens are not usually a major concern in many work environments, it is still important that employees understand basic cautions and procedures in a first-aid situation. Knowing how to be safe around blood and other potentially infected material is important for your own health as well as that of your fellow employees.

Bloodborne Basics

Bloodborne pathogens are microorganisms that are present in blood and can cause diseases. Some well-known examples of bloodborne pathogens include human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), and Hepatitis B and C. Bloodborne pathogens can be life-threatening.

Assume It's Infected

The simplest way to protect yourself from bloodborne pathogens is to treat all blood as possibly infected. Even if you know a coworker very well, you should not assume that you are aware of whether they are carrying any bloodborne pathogens.

In order to prevent infection or spreading of bloodborne pathogens in the workplace, all employees should follow universal precautions, such as:

- Use appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) such as gloves, safety glasses or masks.
- Clean up any blood present in the workplace with chemicals or cleaning products that will adequately kill the microorganisms responsible for bloodborne pathogens.
- Store needles and other sharp objects that could pierce PPE or your skin inside FDA-approved sharps containers.
- Use warning labels for containers carrying regulated waste or sharp objects.

Caution Comes First

In the event that there is blood in the workplace, only employees trained in first aid or designated to perform cleaning duties should address the situation. If you are involved in a situation involving blood or another potentially infectious material, do not attempt to help until you are certain that you are properly protected. First responders have to take care of themselves as well as those in need of assistance.

If you find that you have possibly been exposed to a bloodborne pathogen, wash the blood or other material off thoroughly with soap and warm water, and notify your supervisor. If blood or a potentially infected material gets inside your mouth, eyes, nose or your own broken skin, seek medical attention immediately.

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QUOTATION OF THE MONTH

"When one door of happiness closes, another opens; but often we look so long at the closed door that we do not see the one which has been opened for us."
Helen Keller, American author & disability rights advocate,1880-1968

DON'T IGNORE THAT FIRE ALARM!

You are a creature of habit. Everyone is, to one extent or another. Every day you go to work using the same path, the same door, the same route. And, yet, in case of an emergency, when that route is blocked by fire or another hazard, can you quickly find another way out?

The goal of a fire drill is to make sure you know exactly where (and when) to exit a building in case of an emergency. Yes, we know there are those who dodge the drill. But don't let that be you.

The threat is real. In 2020 alone, there were 111,000 fires in non-residential structures, resulting in 100 civilian deaths.

Experience counts. People who participate in drills and receive emergency training react faster, with better decision making than those without training. Those who have been in emergency situations before also react faster.

The fire drill not only gives people experience, but it also helps people to take action even when they can't see the problem.

Seeing the threat is one reason people move to safety. When people hear a fire alarm, they nearly always try to find out if there is visible smoke or fire. If they don't see any, they might not quickly evacuate. The problem, of course, is that fire and smoke don't have to be in your immediate area for you to be in grave danger. At the sound of a fire alarm, everyone **must** evacuate as quickly as possible.

Acting confidently makes a difference. If you hear the alarm, stand up and move out in a calm, orderly fashion. Simple as that. Acting immediately and with confidence tends to prevent panic in others. People tend to share the experience of others. If one person is confused and panicky, that can spread to others.

MARCH RIDDLES ANSWERS

1. March.
2. The letter "r".
3. Because the ants were on the march!
4. A rash of good luck!
5. Because every March they "turn over a new leaf."

"In your case, it's not serious."