

**CALENDAR of
 EVENTS**

July 30-August 5: IEA/HFES 14th Triannual Ergonomics Conference, San Diego, CA. Alison will present her ergonomics process 6 year outcomes study.

Oct. 6: CMSA Educational Meeting. Alison will present to case managers.

Oct. 29: Alison Heller marries Frank Ono and becomes Alison Heller-Ono.

Need a professional speaker at your next event? Alison Heller, MS, PT, CIE is available to speak at your program. Call to arrange your customized topic with Alison. (888) 288-4463

**Middle Management:
 Are They Your Weakest Link In Your Ergonomics Program?**

In the course of providing ergonomic services and other strategies to business and industry, time and again I have seen clients struggle with gaining the support of its most critical link, supervisors and middle managers. This management entity is often the make or break component of your safety and ergonomics program success or failure and the driving force behind some of your workers' compensation claims.

Employee relationships with supervisors provide an important social consideration in the causation of WMSD (Work Related Musculoskeletal Disorders). Work environments where supervisors aggressively pursue production, are non-supportive of employee's and monitor employee's performance closely cause substantial psychological stress as well as musculoskeletal health complaints (Smith et al, 1992). With increased psychosocial stress, employees are more likely to report symptoms associated with WMSDs. In turn, this dysfunctional relationship drives your claim frequency, occurrence and costs.

Why are supervisors and middle managers unknowingly the weakest link in your safety/ergonomics program? I believe it is a combination of many factors including the following:

1. Priorities are not toward safety.
2. Poor time management in handling

safety responsibility.

3. Not tied to performance or accountability.
4. Lack of supportive feedback.
5. No training on the subject.
6. Do not see the value.
7. Lack of upper management support.
8. Do not understand the organization's program.
9. Lack clear role and responsibilities in the process.



10. Do not trust leadership, employees or each other.
11. Fear of losing power.
12. Lack of self-interest.

So what can be done to strengthen the weakest link in your safety/ergonomics program? Middle managers must have a rational self-interest in such programs if they are expected to support them.

As a result, the following strategies will help to change or strengthen middle management participation in your corporate safety culture.

1. Share with supervisors/managers the overall corporate mission of the program frequently.
2. Align operating beliefs with corporate beliefs.
3. Create a participative management style.
4. Focus on results and rewarding results.
5. Encourage supervisor/employee teams to set standards and goals.

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TO FEDERALIZE ERGONOMICS OR NOT, THAT IS THE QUESTION

The controversy that has followed the Ergonomics Standard over the last few years continues to plague it in its final days as approval is sought. For those of you who have followed the tail of the Standard, here is a quick list of 10 reasons for and against the support of the regulation.

Reasons against:

1. There is no sound scientific research.
2. It is too broad and costly.

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TO FEDERALIZE ERGONOMICS OR NOT, THAT IS
THE QUESTION

(continued from page 1)

3. It is a waste of money compared with cooperative and educational programs.
4. OSHA should seek more non-regulatory alternatives.
5. Many manufacturing businesses believe they will have to lay-off workers or consider moving employees out of the USA.
6. The regulation should focus on business with the highest injury rates.
7. The way it is currently drafted, employers are concerned there will be more employee fraud as workers can be compensated for minor aches and pains.
8. The House Appropriations Committee may try and block funding of the regulation in FY2001 as they believe it does not include Federal employees; is not substantiated by science and should wait for the NAS study to be done in 2001.
9. It interferes with state workers' compensation laws regarding pre-existing conditions and differentiating work injury from home injury.
10. Small businesses lack the resources and knowledge to implement the standard.

Despite the 10 reasons listed above there are contrary points to each to support the regulation and its efforts.

Supportive reasons:

1. Major studies (>5,000) describe a scientific cause/effect relationship between repetitive motion and other risk factors and RMIs/CTDs.
2. The regulation addresses the concerns of small business by exempting business with 10 or less employees from record keeping, excluding agriculture, construction and maritime.
3. The implementation time to perform job hazard analyses is extended to 2 years and for permanent measures, 3 years.
4. A quick fix option implemented within 90 days and found successful within 30 days will not require full program compliance.
5. The Standard is expected to prevent 3 million MSDSs in 10 years and save \$9.1 billion per year far out weighing the costs of \$4.2 billion per year.
6. Employee perpetrated fraud occurs in <2% of workers' compensation cases and would not necessarily lead to increase claim reporting or benefit costs.
7. The NAS study is a political stall tactic.
8. Employers will continue to make decisions on "recordable" injuries and whether the injuries were related to repetitive motion.
9. OSHA has tried using educational and voluntary programs for several years without much impact.
10. Many employers have successfully implemented ergo strategies with great benefit to workers' compensation

claims costs and productivity.

**Middle Management:
Are they Your Weakest Link?
(Continued from page 1):**

6. Appeal to self-interest to enhance motivation.
7. Maintain program values in concise, simple terms.
8. Assess how people are investing their time, energy and reputations.
9. Engage managers and supervisors in trainings that pertain to safety/ergonomics and gear the instruction specifically to desired outcomes the organization needs from them. (See article "Management Training Strategies for a Stronger Link".)

By focusing specifically on the supervisor/middle management culture and its impact on the overall organizational culture as it pertains to safety and workplace health, you can expect to see dramatic changes in the perceived value of your safety and health program. These changes will positively impact improved employee/management relationships affecting your workers' compensation claims and costs as well as productivity and morale.

Reference:

Weiss, Alan "Managing for Peak Performance" Las Brisas Research Press, 1994.
"Work Related Musculoskeletal Disorders", Taylor & Frances, 1995



**Management Training
Strategies For A Stronger Link**

In order to enhance middle management participation in your safety/ergonomics program, consider customizing training that addresses pertinent issues for these groups.

Executive training should include:

Supervisors:

- Ergonomics training.
- Basic structure and function of the human body at work.
- Work methods to control/prevent occupational WMSDs.
- Early recognition signs of WMSDs.
- Information on medical referral and obtaining ergonomic worksite analysis.
- Roles and responsibilities in return to work procedures, restricted duty and accomodating injured workers.
- Understanding and managing the change process, including their role.

Managers:

- Need for management commitment to reduce or prevent WMSDs and supporting injured workers.
- Support training of supervisors and workers, set-up of WMSD prevention programs, recognition of work relatedness of WMSD and reinforcement of health and safety rules and principles. (continued on page 4)

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SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

INSITE PT is pursuing incorporation and a name change which is anticipated to occur in the Fall of 2000. Stay in touch for our exciting announcement which will impact our products, services and Internet presence.

INSITE PT received the **5 Star Seal of Ergonomic Excellence** for a new workshop entitled "Train the Evaluator" specifically geared towards PTs. It is the first ergonomics training course for PTs to be fully accredited. The acknowledgement was provided by the Oxford Research Institute. The ORI is an independent, non-profit accredited and certification corporation which provides third party independent testing of ergonomic tools, task procedures, training and ergonomic professionals to assure excellence in ergonomics.

Progress is being made in finalizing the NSC ANSI Z365 Guideline for the Prevention and Management of CTDs. Final approval is expected sometime within the next 12-18 months. This guideline offers similar strategies to existing guidelines such as the "Meat Packers Guidelines" and the proposed Fed-OSHA regulation. It is a voluntary compliance guideline for business and industry interested in reducing MSDs.

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FYI Websites:



www.safetyonline.com— Safety and ergonomic news updates.

www.123relax.com— Alternative healthcare information site.

www.Dr.Sheedy.com— Computer Vision Syndrome information site.



Management Training Strategies For A Stronger Link (continued from page 3)

Managers (continued)

Overview of ergonomics and WMSDs within the context of the company's organization's goals, polices and procedures.

Understand work related injury compensation, experience and cost.

Understand accepted standards, guidelines and regulations.

Macro ergonomics and system issues.

Management of change.

Cost expectations of process.

If you are interested in strengthening your management link, contact INSITE PT to learn more about our Executive Training Seminars specifically geared towards supervisors and managers. (888) 288-4463 or visit our Services section at www.insitept.com

See something that interests you in our newsletter or have a question? Call us. 888-288-4463 or Fax 831-648-8330. E-mail us at alisonh@insitept.com or check the web at www.insitept.com.