

**Defense Safety Oversight Council  
Occupational Medicine, Injury Prevention and Mitigation Task Force**

**Recommended Ergonomics Goals**

**Background.** Ergonomics-related injuries and illnesses such as back pain, carpal tunnel syndrome, nerve compression, tendonitis and strains account for a large percentage of DOD military and civilian lost time and limited duty prescriptions. The majority of these conditions are preventable. Task, tool and equipment engineering and the application of ergonomic principles reduce the risk of injury and can improve productivity and efficiency.

Many DOD installations have established strong ergonomics programs and have seen positive results; however, many other installations have placed little emphasis on ergonomics and injury prevention. The goal of this metric is to integrate ergonomics into standard safety and occupational health business practices and to hold safety, industrial hygiene and occupational health accountable for ergonomics.

**Recommended Ergonomics Goals.**

- a. Every safety inspection of a worksite includes evaluation for potential ergonomic hazards.
- b. Every industrial hygiene basic characterization of a work process includes an evaluation for potential ergonomic hazards.
- c. Every occupational health site visit includes evaluation for potential ergonomic hazards.
- d. Every return to work evaluation and job accommodation includes evaluation of ergonomic hazards.

**Compliance Level Target:** 100%

**Measurement Tools:**

- a. **Primary Source: DOEHRS.**  
The DOEHRS system will provide a central database of workplace assessment information, including ergonomic hazard identification and assessment. This central database allows central oversight of installation compliance and can establish accountability. DOEHRS Build 1 is scheduled for beta testing release within the next few weeks and is scheduled for full deployment in September. Safety and occupational health personnel will have access to DOEHRS.
- b. **Alternate Sources of Information.**
  - DOD Enterprise System – Safety Component
  - DOD Ergonomics Working Group web-based tools

**Hazard Identification**

1. Each survey, basic characterization, site visit or accommodation will include the following initial question:  
***“Potential Ergonomics Hazard?”***  
Three choices will be presented to answer the question:  
**Yes                      No                      Uncertain**

If **‘Yes’** further assessment is conducted based on the type of ergonomic hazard.

If **'No'** the negative answer is recorded in the central database and no action is taken.

If **'Uncertain'** six screening questions will assist in determining if a potential ergonomic hazard exists. A positive response to any of these six questions results in a "Yes" answer to the initial question. The six questions are:

- Does the task include performance of the same motion or motion pattern every few seconds for more than a total of 2 hours/day?
  - Does the task include a fixed or awkward work posture (e.g., overhead work, twisted or bent back, bent wrist, kneeling, stooping, squatting) for more than a total of 2 hours/day?
  - Does the task include exposure to localized or whole body vibration (e.g., the use of vibrating or impact tools or equipment) for more than a total of 2 hours/day?
  - Does the task include forceful hand exertions for more than a total of 2 hours/day?
  - Does the task include unassisted frequent or forceful manual handling for more than a total of 2 hours/day?
  - Have there been any recorded work-related musculoskeletal disorders among employees or service members in the same or similar jobs?
2. The central database will provide information on all basic industrial hygiene characterizations including a response to the initial question. It will also provide information on the number of safety inspections, site visits and job accommodations that addressed ergonomics. These numbers can be cross-checked with other installation safety and occupational health activity reports.
  3. Potential ergonomic hazard identification reports from the installations will be compared to reported military and civilian injuries and illnesses. A high rate of ergonomics-related conditions and a low rate of positive responses to the initial "Potential Ergonomic Hazard" question indicate a problem with staff training or a compliance disconnect.

## Implementation Plan.

1. Request Occupational Medicine, Injury Prevention and Mitigation Task Force assistance in establishing a DOD requirement to include the initial potential ergonomic hazard question in all safety, industrial hygiene and occupational health worksite assessments and job accommodations.
2. The DOD Ergonomics Working Group will initiate an education / awareness campaign for DOD SOH personnel on the inclusion of ergonomics in all assessments.
3. Compliance analysis procedures will be established during the DOEHRS Beta Test Phase.
4. Compliance information will be collected as the DOEHRS system is implemented. If there are unforeseen delays in the DOEHRS implementation, the alternative data sources will be pursued.