

# DoD Ergonomics Working Group NEWS



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## At the Defense Energy Support Center, Ergonomics is a #1 Priority

As part of the Defense Logistics Agency (DLA), the Defense Energy Support Center (DESC) at Fort Belvoir, Virginia, works to support the warfighter and manage the energy sources of the future.

DESC has a very proactive Ergonomics Program. To ensure the DESC safety staff was well equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary to promote such a program, the staff attended and completed the 40-hour USACHPPM Ergonomics Course and the National Safety Council's Ergonomics Course. This training provided the staff with:

- A better understanding of ergonomics and how best to apply the program within DESC.
- The basic knowledge needed to identify and correct deficiencies and to recognize when experts were needed to assist in correcting those deficiencies.



*DESC promotes the Ergonomics Program with items provided by DLA including posters and mouse pads.*

DESC safety staff applied their ergonomics training to employee computer workstations. **Take a look at how ergonomics improved their workplace!**

### Chairs

DESC employees spend the majority of their time sitting at their computers. The safety staff recognized that all those chairs were occupied by workers who were different sizes, weights, and heights and some of those workers had pre-existing medical issues or physical disabilities. It was time to make chairs available to the employees that met their specific needs.

Several companies were contacted and asked to provide chairs that could be used and tested in the field. DESC initiated a 6-month study using a select group of employees to test these chairs and provide feedback. Those participating in the study ranged in height from 5"0" to 6"5" and had either pre-existing medical issues, complaints of discomfort, or had no issues or complaints. The chairs were swapped out every 2 weeks with all participants having an opportunity to test each model provided.

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Through this process, one chair was identified that came in three different sizes, was adjustable (including height, seat pan for leg support, arm supports, lumbar, and shoulder support), and had a minimum of a 10-year warranty for replacement/repair of parts.

The chair's manufacturer had a good reputation for product quality, its products were available worldwide, and it would give a substantial discount for large quantity purchases.

As a result of the study, the Safety Office was able to personally fit each employee with a chair that met their needs.



*The "VERTE" chair reduces pressure points on the spine. For example, if a worker had surgery on a particular vertebra, and the pressure of the worker's back against the chair continued to cause pain, the VERTE chair's adjustability would alleviate the pressure.*



### Keyboards/Mice/Keyboard Trays

Employees were given the opportunity to select ergonomic keyboards and trays and ergonomic mice that came in sizes from extra-small to extra-large for both left- and right-handed workers.

Depending on the type of keyboard being used, the employees were also given the option of using a tray or desktop. The decision was based on factors that also included the workstation configuration and keyboard installation.



### Telephone Headsets

Certain employees who spent a great deal of time on the telephone had a tendency to hold the phone with their shoulders. By doing so, the employees began to experience severe neck and back pain. DESC worked with the Telecommunications Officer to provide telephone headsets to employees on an as-needed basis with supervisor approval.

## **Ergonomic Workstation Evaluations**

Workstation evaluations are conducted when more complex issues such as pre-existing medical issues, reasonable accommodations, or the prevention of work-related musculoskeletal disorders (WMSDs) require "expert" intervention. Conducting these evaluations has resulted in a reduction of potential claims for lost time and medical expenses.

## **Employee Ergonomics Training**

DESC took advantage of the recent ergonomics training course provided by the DLA Headquarters Safety and Health Office; approximately 25 DESC employees participated in the training. Participants included collateral duty safety monitors (CDSMs), supervisors, and employees. This training gave the CDSMs and supervisors a better understanding of how to recognize potential problems in the workplace and the appropriate actions to take to reduce injuries to employees.

## **Random Walks**

DESC takes a proactive approach to ergonomics by conducting random walks through work areas. This has allowed the DESC safety staff to quickly identify deficiencies and take immediate corrective action when needed.

## **Employee Feedback**

DESC encourages their employees to report problems to their supervisors *before* they develop WMSDs.

**For more information about the DESC Ergonomics Program,  
contact the DESC-WE Safety Office:**

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