

DoD Ergonomics Working Group NEWS



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www.ergoworkinggroup.org

Get Ready - October is Ergonomics Month



The Human Factors and Ergonomics Society (HFES) has designated October as National Ergonomics Month—a time for those of us in the ergonomics business to celebrate our science, share our successes, and educate others about the important role ergonomics plays in making our lives better and safer.

Common everyday products and systems that we take for granted have been developed by ergonomists and human factors engineers to improve our lives. For example, strobe lights on school buses and traffic lights improve driver visibility, awareness, and performance; split key keyboards improve typists wrist posture and minimize wrist stress; lifting equations improve worker health and safety by quantifying lifts to ensure workers are not overexposed; and the simple rhyme “lefty loosey righty tighty” that helps us unscrew a jar or open up a water spigot.

Increase Awareness

To increase awareness of the value of the human factors and ergonomics field we recommend activities that will engage and even entertain your coworkers. Not only will they get a better understanding of what human factors and ergonomics is, but they will also understand the benefits of applying human factors and ergonomics in their everyday lives. **Suggestions for activities that illustrate the concepts of human factors and ergonomics follow on the next page.**

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Try these activities at your workplace:

- Tired Eyes. Offer a computer user eye drops to only one eye, see if the person notices a difference between their eyes. Of course you can offer the other eye some drops after a quick engagement of how computer work is associated with dry and tired eyes (usually people blink less, stare at the monitor more, and tend not to look at objects further than 20 feet for prolonged periods of time).
- Have people wear a backpack with 40 pounds in it. This is a good approximation of how a 10-12 year old feels walking to school with a back pack. Offer tips of how the backpack should be packed and worn to decrease back stress.
- Bring in two apple peelers one designed with ergonomics principle and the other one something that looks like your grandmother would have used it. Have someone peel an apple with both peeler designs and see which design they like better. Discuss how the newer design reduces mechanical compression and is more captive in your hand. It would not hurt to have some caramel apple dip to reward the peeler.
- Have a person lift 15 pounds with their arms extended and time them to see how long they can maintain that posture. Then have a second person of equal or lesser strength hold 20 pounds in a neutral posture (elbows bent at 90° and elbows close to the body) and time them to see how long they can maintain that posture. Ideally the person lifting more weight will be able to lift longer. This helps illustrate the importance of posture and to note that jobs designed well do indeed increase worker performance.

Online “Support”

Visit the DoD Ergonomics Working Group website and the Human Factors and Ergonomics Society website for practical, user-friendly information and free publication downloads:

- www.ergoworkinggroup.org
- www.hfes.org

Request these posters to educate your coworkers:

These 18 x 24 posters are available free of charge (quantities are limited). To order, call the U.S. Army Center for Health Promotion and Preventive Medicine (USACHPPM) Ergonomics Program at 410-436-3928.



Time to Take a Computer Break

These 10 exercises reduce physical stress while working at a computer workstation, improving worker comfort and productivity.



Ergonomics: Designing a Comfortable Workstation

From eliminating glare, to low back support to proper footrest, this poster shows what it takes to work comfortably at your computer.



**Work Smarter!
Ergonomic Risk Factors**

Force, awkward posture, static work, temperature, vibration, pressure point, and repetition—all risk factors you need to work to avoid.

More Info Coming in October

Watch for the October issue of Ergo News with a special feature: 52 “Ergonomics Tips of the Week” so you can engage in a new ergonomics topic each week for a full year.