



UNIVERSITY OF
SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

**EH&S
FACT SHEET**
April 2004

**How Ergonomics
Affects You:**

Employee Training:

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Environmental Health & Safety
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Visit us at:

<http://capsnet.usc.edu/ehs/>

Ergonomics

You've heard the word. But, do you really know what it means? According to Webster, ergonomics is: "An applied science that coordinates the design of devices, systems, and physical working conditions with the capacities and requirements of the worker."

Ergonomics involves arranging the environment to fit the person. While it is most often associated with the workplace, ergonomics is also applied elsewhere. For example, car manufacturers boast of ergonomically designed vehicles.

Everyday, both at work and at home, your body is subject to tasks that if performed in excess could cause it harm. Risk factors or work conditions that may affect you include:

- Use of inappropriate tools;
- Poor body mechanics;
- Repetitive tasks;
- Forceful exertions;
- Restrictive work stations;
- Awkward postures;
- Lifting heavy or awkward objects.

Staff members trained to identify and avoid ergonomic hazards are better able to avoid those hazards, leading to a safer workplace. All staff members should know:

1. How to identify common signs of stress indicating that a process or workstation should be reviewed. Signs include discomfort with specific movements, irregular stiffness or pain, often appear gradually, and may disappear during rest;
2. The importance of reporting signs and symptoms as soon as possible to their supervisor;
3. How to report potential risk factors in your work area.

Contact Environmental Health and Safety at 213-740-6448 (or online at <http://capsnet.usc.edu/ehs/>) for assistance with training sessions, workplace evaluations, or for answers to questions regarding ergonomics in your work area.

Use the EH&S Fact Sheets to facilitate safety discussions in your work area. Post the monthly topic on your bulletin board.