

ERGONOMIC BREAKS

Ergonomic injury risk factors include forceful movements, repetitive motions, awkward postures, and lack of rest. Rest periods give the body time to recover from work; brevertime exercises and stretches strengthen the body. Workers should think of themselves as Industrial Athletes; athletes wouldn't participate in a sport without proper rest and warm-up, so use the same preparation on the job.

Maintaining overall health reduces your risk of injury. Get a good night's sleep to rest your body and maintain alertness. Eat healthy foods and drink fluids to boost energy and stay hydrated. Aerobic exercise and weight training increase strength and vitality. Stretching, yoga, and Pilates improve flexibility and build core body strength.

Pay attention to signs of discomfort and fatigue on the job; these are warning signs from your body. As muscles tire during a work task, slouching can lead to poor posture, sloppy, uncontrolled movements, and injuries. Rest breaks mean recovery for the body. During a job task, take micro-breaks lasting 2-5 seconds every twenty minutes. Take mini-breaks lasting 3-5 minutes every thirty to sixty minutes. These short breaks give the body a rest, reduce discomfort, and improve your performance.

Alternate your work activities and postures throughout the day. Rotating tasks may seem inefficient, but the rest and use of different muscle groups increases energy and maintains productivity. For example, if you are a landscaper, don't trim all of the shrubs, sweep up the trimmings, and then leaf-blow the whole area; work in sections and trim,

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ARE YOU READY FOR THE BIG ONE?

Earthquakes aren't planned, but in California, a 6.7 magnitude or greater earthquake is predicted in the next 30 years. An earthquake that size can cause personal injuries, strain public services, and disrupt business. The best way for a business to survive an earthquake is to have a plan, be prepared, and review emergency procedures with workers.

Businesses must have an emergency evacuation plan that details for workers how to evacuate their building, where to assemble, how to account for everyone, and

how to get further instructions to act. Current emergency contact phone numbers for all workers and management are critical.

Businesses should also list and prioritize their functions in a Business Continuity Plan (BCP) that ensures access to the people, materials, and other supplies needed to continue business operation.

Survey each workspace to assure that heavy items are stored at lower heights or

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REVIVE YOUR FIRST AID PROGRAM

What would happen today, if there was an accident at your workplace? Would employees and management know what to do? Would the injured person get the best possible care?

When an accident happens, a first aid program that meets the requirements of the law and is tailored to the type and size of the workplace can literally make the difference between life and death or between recovery and permanent disablement.

Employers should insure that all employees know where emergency information is posted at the work site. The emergency notice should state the phone numbers of the closet ambulance service, fire/rescue unit, police, and hospital. The amount of time it takes to look up one of these important numbers can make a big difference to a seriously injured person. The location of first aid equipment and rescue equipment should also be posted prominently.

All work sites should have a person with first aid or medical training readily available in case of an emergency. First aid equipment and supplies, including a variety of dressings and instruments, as well as an up-to-date first aid manual, should be stored where they can be reached quickly and easily in case of an accident. These supplies should be inspected frequently, making sure they are kept in sanitary and usable condition and re-stocked after use. Larger workplaces may need more than one, fully equipped first aid kit.

In isolated work sites, emergency supplies and an action plan are especially important. At least one person trained in emergency first aid should always be on-site. If first aid is not given properly, it can sometimes hurt rather than help an injured or ill person, or even be harmful to the person giving the first aid. All workers should know who on-site is trained to give first aid, where the emergency first aid equipment is located, and what medical professional or medical facility should be contacted if a medical emergency should occur. ••

GET WITH THE (SUBSTANCE ABUSE) PROGRAM

Substance abuse in the workplace is expensive-both for the abusers and their employers. Abusers not only jeopardize the safety and health of themselves and others; their substance impairment impacts productivity, customer service, and company profits. A substance abuse problem may start with one individual but the effects can permeate many aspects of the business operation resulting in an inferior product or company image.

The best defense against the problem is to establish and reinforce a substance abuse program that includes at least five elements:

A written substance abuse policy – The policy will send a clear signal to present and future employees about what is expected from them and what will be done if the policy is violated.

Supervisory training – Supervisors are key to the program because they have direct contact with workers. They should understand the policy, be able to identify and help resolve performance problems, and know how to refer workers to available assistance. But, it should be made clear to supervisors that their responsibilities are limited.

Employee education and awareness – A training program should be established to explain the company's policies. It should describe the impact that substance abuse can have on health, safety, productivity, morale, job security, business solvency, and personal relationships.

An employee assistance program (EAP) – EAPs can help employees identify and deal with their problems, through confidential, short-term counseling, referrals and follow-up services.

A drug and alcohol testing program – The drug testing program should be fair, accurate, and legally defensible. It should meet current standards or regulations for the industry and should be the last step of a comprehensive substance abuse program.

Drug and alcohol abuse is a societal problem that may never be completely removed from the workplace, but if employers adopt a proactive drug and alcohol abuse program to address the problem, they may be able to prevent the negative effects on their employees, customers, and business. ••

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**CAC Human
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HOTLINE**

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Monday – Friday
8 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

This hotline is free to all CAC members and is staffed with HR professionals from the California Employers Association (CEA). CEA provides CAC members with safety consultant information, safety advice, Cal-OSHA updates, on-site safety training as well as access to a safety training video lending program.

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sweep, and leaf-blow in alternating tasks. If you work at a single workstation and job task all day, move into different postures while you work: first standing, then standing with one foot resting on a stool, then sitting.

Stretches help you warm-up before work and relax during breaks; they increase flexibility and boost blood flow and oxygen to muscles. Perform stretches slowly and gently; avoid extreme postures and stop stretching if you feel pain or discomfort. For stretching and other warm-up exercises suited to your particular job task, contact your State Fund Loss Control Office and ask for an Ergonomic Specialist. ••

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secured so they won't. Furniture such as bookshelves and file cabinets along with storage racks and shelving should be strapped or attached to the wall to keep it stable and upright. Keep doors, exits, and aisles clear at all times for quick access evacuations. Keep areas under desks and tables uncluttered to make room to take cover in an earthquake. Large equipment such as boilers, tanks, and machines need to be secured properly so they will not fall over in an earthquake.

Gather emergency supplies for the workplace. Fire extinguishers should be charged and inspected monthly for ready use. Periodically test fire alarms, sprinklers, and emergency lighting. Keep flashlights, a radio, extra batteries, and a first aid kit on hand at all times. Consider stockpiling food, water, blankets, and sanitary supplies such as

toilet paper and portable toilets. Keep enough supplies for the number of workers that may need to shelter or work at your facility after an earthquake. Encourage workers to prepare personal emergency supplies for their use and in their car, including comfortable clothes and shoes, a flashlight and batteries, first aid kit, food, water, and necessary medications.

Finally, train and review all emergency procedures including evacuations. Provide training on first aid and CPR techniques. Teach workers how to protect themselves during an earthquake whether in a building, in a car, or on the street. Finally, practice business recovery procedures by inspecting and restarting equipment and computers in order of priority. ••

**For Cal-OSHA, Ergonomics & Safety Consultant Information,
please visit www.calcollectors.net or call
the CAC office at (916) 929-2125.**