

Musculoskeletal Disorder (MSD) Prevention Roles

Ontario's Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA) is based on the Internal Responsibility System. This means everyone has a role to play in maintaining a healthy and safe workplace. Employers, supervisors, workers and the Joint Health & Safety Committee (JHSC) or the Health & Safety Representative (H&S rep) must work together to prevent injuries and illnesses. Some suggested MSD prevention roles are listed below.

Employers and Managers should:

- incorporate MSD prevention into their health and safety policy and program
- review the health and safety program to include or strengthen MSD prevention activities
- make sure that workers and JHSC members or the H&S rep are trained how to recognize, assess and eliminate or control MSD hazards
- ensure that supervisors know what to do if they recognize MSD hazards or if a worker raises a concern
- ensure that MSD hazards related to poor design of tools, equipment, workstations or work practices are identified and any associated risks are controlled
- make sure that new equipment is designed and installed to reduce exposure to MSD hazards, and
- ensure that workers have the equipment and training they need to reduce their exposure to MSD hazards.

Supervisors should:

- ensure that everyone under their supervision is aware of MSD hazards on the job and is trained to do his or her job safely
- look for MSD hazards during workplace inspections, job task analyses and discussions with workers, and when reviewing injury reports
- reinforce proper working techniques and use of equipment and personal protective equipment (PPE)
- encourage and support workers taking scheduled breaks
- check that workers have adjusted their workstations to suit themselves and their work, and provide help as needed
- support workers when they have questions or concerns
- be aware of MSD warning signs and indicators, and
- take action on reported MSD hazards and concerns and follow up with workers.

See next page for Worker and JHSC/H&S rep roles

Workers should:

- report MSD hazards and concerns to their supervisors
- take scheduled breaks and take advantage of opportunities to change postures or relax muscles
- move around and occasionally change positions
- go to their supervisors with questions and concerns or to ask for additional training
- offer suggestions to improve working conditions to their supervisor, health and safety representative or the JHSC
- be aware of symptoms of MSDs and report them early if they occur
- ensure that they understand the information and instructions provided
- use proper working techniques
- use the equipment and tools provided to reduce exposure to MSD hazards, and
- know how to adjust the workstation to suit themselves and the work they do, and to ask for help as needed.

JHSC members and H&S reps should:

- get training on recognizing, assessing and controlling MSD hazards
- ensure that MSD hazards are included on inspection checklists
- actively look for MSD hazards
- discuss MSD-related concerns at JHSC meetings and with the employer and workers
- review training records to ensure that everyone in the workplace has received training on how to do their jobs safely and how to identify the MSD hazards in the workplace, and
- make recommendations to the employer on how to eliminate, control or reduce exposure to MSD hazards.

Content sourced from the MSD Prevention Guideline for Ontario, Part 3B: MSD Prevention Toolbox (2007)