



## **Proper Office Equipment a Valuable Investment**

Much has been said in the past about ergonomics in our working environment. However, I contend that the term ergonomics, its scientific feel and sound, masks our perceptions of the benefits we acquire from ergonomic equipment that is properly selected for or by us. Safety and health has not yet attained the same status in the office as in the factory. True, we are more likely to find the potential for life threatening situations in the factory, on construction sites or out on the farm. Nevertheless, debilitating activities, which are preventable, do occur regularly in offices.

Our offices today are marked by extensive use of computers and maximization of floor space by compressing more people into a given area. However, office workers, or anybody for that matter who uses computers extensively, face years of pain and discomfort if they or their employers choose their furniture unwisely. If keyboarding at the wrong height or angle produces pain and ultimately disability, it is a safety issue and needs to be addressed. If sitting on a swivel chair with an easily tipped four-leg base, produces a tip that ends up with a serious lower back injury, that is a safety issue. If a person works at or on furniture that at the wrong heights for them and experiences nagging back or shoulder pain, this too is a safety issue. Untreated, it can become permanent. If in our compressed work areas, sharp corners and edges on furniture and equipment cause regular injuries, no matter how small, it is a safety issue. If the compressed cubicles that many office workers spend their days in are an obstacle to air flow and cause respiratory distress, this too is a safety issue.

Unfortunately, many and sometimes all of these a situations are present in many office environments today. On the bright side, remedies in the form of proper equipment and training are widely available today. The selection of adjustable chairs is endless; most furniture manufacturers include equipment that adjusts to the individual user. The ingredient often overlooked is the advice and training on how to choose and maximize the benefits experience by the features offered on the equipment. A word to the wise: find a dealer or consultant that you trust and listen for advice that makes sense. The features in chairs tend to produce different results for different people, no matter how ergonomic the claims for that chair are. Try out chairs in a showroom till you find one that works for you, then try it in your office for a day or so. It is your back that has to live in that chair in the coming years.

For employers, designate someone to do periodic training, especially with new employees. Do audits, looking for obvious situations where employees are working at inappropriate heights and correct the problem. Employers tend to look at equipment as an expense. Work-induced

disabilities are an increasing expense for many businesses. Investment in proper equipment and training can eliminate the disabilities, reduce insurance costs and create a more productive workforce in the process. It is a sound investment.

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Top Office Products