

Job Rotation

Will Job Rotation Prevent MSDs?

Ergonomic research strongly indicates that over-exposure to one type of movement can lead to wear and tear on the muscles. One of the best preventative administrative approaches to reduce injury is to implement a job rotation schedule. The general principle is: *rotating work allows fatigued muscle groups to recuperate while others perform work.*

Risks

1. Initially, there may be some confusion with scheduling and complaints from employees. Very few changes go through without some resistance.
2. Productivity initially may be slightly reduced as employees are cross-trained.
3. Employees may initially experience discomfort due to the use of new muscles.

Benefits

1. Reduces employee exposure to the physical demands of one task.
2. Different muscle groups are used.
3. Decreases fatigue in one muscle group.
4. Minimizes the amount of time an employee is exposed to a maximum weight, repetition or an environmental hazard (i.e. vibration, noise, air quality).
5. Monotony is eliminated.

The benefits have been shown to greatly outweigh the risks. In fact, all of the risks listed above can all be controlled when they are understood and handled properly. An "optimal" job rotation includes the following:

- ☒ Tasks that use different muscle groups.
- ☒ Frequent rotation (i.e. every 30-120 minutes is optimal, depending on the tasks).
- ☒ Tasks that have different production rates, force requirements, environmental stimulation, cycle times and posture requirements.
- ☒ Equipment and hand tools that can be operated with both hands or feet.

Job rotation should **not** be the only strategy employed to reduce injuries. Companies should continue to find ways to reduce exposure through proper workstation set up and automation.

