

# MANUFACTURING

## *in Lehman's Terms*

## Ergonomics and Funding

As I'm sitting here writing this, I can't help but think it's July already! Where has this year gone!?! For this month's article, I would like to focus on ergonomics and workplace injury. Ergonomics has garnered increasing attention in recent years, and for good reason. Aside from affecting the health of the employee, there is also a very real cost associated with workplace injury. These costs include absenteeism, reduced productivity, administrative expenses, insurance premiums, turnover, etc. This is especially true in manufacturing where workers are more prone to injury than in many other occupations.

It shouldn't come as a surprise to those in the manufacturing industry that the primary type of work-related injury is musculoskeletal disorders (MSD's). Whether it be carpal tunnel, tendinitis, etc., MSD's account for approximately 33% of the reported workplace injuries. According to the Occupational Safety and Health Association, manual material handling is the primary cause of injury with 4 out of 5 cases related to the lower back. Fortunately, many of these MSD's can be avoided.



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When conducting a workplace review, be cognizant of the following risk factors:

- Excessive force
- Repetitive motion
- Awkward postures including twisting of the body
- Cold temperatures
- Vibration

Identifying and addressing these hazards is a great long-term investment in employee wellness, productivity and cost reduction efforts, but it can come with a relatively high upfront cost. Fortunately, North Dakota's Workforce Safety and Insurance (WSI) has an ERGO PHASE II grant program.

This is essentially a two-part program:

### **PART I: Ergonomic Initiative**

- Complete the Ergonomic Initiative Application
- Once approved, you will receive an email with a list of providers
- The providers are all under contract with WSI (\$200/hour plus mileage if applicable). WSI will contribute 75% of the cost of the assessment. The remaining 25% is the employer's responsibility to the chosen provider. You can choose to do the entire facility or focus on one or two areas for the assessments
- WSI will cover 100% of ergonomic-related training by the chosen provider
- The provider will provide a final assessment report listing recommendations

## **PART II: Ergonomic Grant**

- After the above has been completed, there is a grant available to assist with any ergonomic-related equipment purchases
- ***The grant application must be approved before any equipment is purchased or ordered.***
- Submit a completed ***ERGO PHASE II*** grant application (separate from above Employer Application), quote for requested equipment, and a copy of provider's report
- WSI will contribute 75% up to the maximum eligible amount based on the employer's premium for the previously completed year. For amount information, please have an authorized individual contact me for this information.

As noted, this program is based on the amount of the employer's premium, so depending on what that level is, the maximum award the employer can receive (lifetime) will vary from \$5,000 up to \$50,000. This has been a very popular program utilized by many within our manufacturing community (since August 1<sup>st</sup> 2013) for assessments and purchases of ergonomic equipment such as adjustable workstations, hoist and other lifting devices, etc.

That is WSI's ERGO PHASE II grant program in a nutshell. More complete information is available on their website at <https://www.workforcesafety.com/employers/safety/grants/ergonomic-initiative-grant>. For more information regarding this program please contact WSI or myself at the number below. I will continue this discussion next month with information regarding other programs our manufacturers in North Dakota have at their disposal to stay competitive with the rest of the world. Have a great July 4<sup>th</sup> holiday!

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