

A New NIOSH Ergonomics Study

This study is the essence of Safety Solutions Ergonomic HR Product. This new study validates our data dating back to 1989. Employees are a company's most valued asset, our human capital. Read carefully.

Ergonomics Climate Assessment

Categories: Ergonomics, NIOSH-funded Research

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Researchers from Colorado State University and the Colorado School of Public Health recently found workplaces that value employees' safety and well-being as much as company productivity yield the greatest rewards.

The study, "Ergonomics Climate Assessment: A measure of operational performance and employee well-being," was recently published in the Applied Ergonomics journal. The study describes a new tool, the Ergonomics Climate

Assessment, which measures employee perception of their workplace's emphasis on the design and modification of work to maximize both employee performance and well-being.

Utilizing ergonomic principles can result in a "positive ergonomics climate" at a company and can lead to reduced physical and mental strain, lowered risk of work-related injuries and illnesses, and an improvement in work quality and efficiency. The researchers identified 40 questions that best describe an organization's ergonomics climate. The questions represented four indicators of ergonomics climate: management commitment, employee involvement, job hazard analysis, and training and knowledge. With this information, they studied an organization's Ergonomic Climate and its relationship to employees' self-reported work-related musculoskeletal pain by surveying 706 employees over two years.

The researchers found that when an organization promoted productivity and employee well-being equally to their workers, and with a strong emphasis on both, employees reported having less work-related musculoskeletal pain. However, when workers perceived an emphasis on either performance or well-being unequally, regardless of which concept was felt to be more important, the researchers found workers reported greater levels of work-related musculoskeletal pain. The researchers hypothesized that one potential mechanism for this relationship could be work-related stress. If performance is perceived to be more important, the worker may feel stress over getting the job done regardless of their health. On the other hand, if well-being is perceived to be more important, the worker may feel that ergonomic improvements to their job will harm their productivity. A "balanced" system where performance and well-being are valued equally reduces competing demands resulting in less stress and strain.

This study adds new evidence to the argument that using tools such as ergonomics to increase employees' well-being in the workplace benefits not only the employee, but business performance as well.