

**Risk Management  
Environmental Health & Safety  
Emergency Management  
Ergonomics  
Continuity of Operations  
Campus Security**

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**EHS Specialist – Shared Services**  
Tracielynn Walters

### 1 Ergonomics

Ergonomics is an applied science concerned with designing and arranging the equipment we use so we interact efficiently and safely with it. By altering our work methods, workstations, or tools, we can work towards reducing or removing physical strain or excessive stress, which can result in fewer aches and pains. In other words, ergonomics is the concept of adjusting the work environment to fit the user and not the other way around.

Recent research indicates that much of our waking time is spent watching a screen. In fact, screen

time continues to be on the rise. According to [comparitech](#), the average American spends 6 hours and 59 minutes looking at a screen every day.

What can be done to improve our ergonomic situations in this environment? Listed below are three recommendations to reduce stress, decrease the possibility of musculoskeletal disorders, and promote a more enjoyable work environment.

#### Get up, stretch, and walk

Move throughout the day. Every 30 minutes, stand up and take a moment to stretch. Plan short walks throughout the day. Maintaining a healthy level of physical activity can promote productivity and reduce stress.

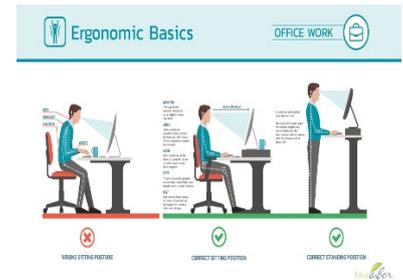
#### Work in neutral

Learn how to setup work desk and work in neutral. It’s important to scan our body for tension and adjust our workstation so that we can relax while working. The EHS Specialist can assess an office workstation and recommend how to adjust it properly. An evaluation of a workstation includes the chair, desk, and monitors. In addition, the positions of computer mouse, keyboard, phone, and other commonly used equipment will be considered. Avoid having to routinely reach for desk items. The idea is to bring them close to avoid muscular exertion and stress.

#### Don’t forget the eyes

Eye health is important. Scheduling periodic eye exams allows an opportunity to discuss screen time with an ophthalmologist. The doctor can provide guidance on changes in vision and other symptoms, such as dryness or itchiness. Just like the body needs a break, the eyes do, too. Take time to give eyes a break from the screen. For brief

breaks, try focusing on a distant object for a few seconds. Take a look around. Ensure that glare on the screen is reduced and the illumination in the work area promotes easy reading, writing, and task performance.



### 2 General Office Safety

The following recommendations can result in eliminating, or at least minimizing, the risk of injuries on campus.

- Thoroughly understand how to use office business machinery prior to use. Supervision should ensure employees know how to use equipment.
- Information about Ergonomic principles and concepts about workstations, healthy spinal positioning while seated or lifting objects, and relevant resources for ergonomics is available from [The Office of Campus Safety – Shared Services](#).
- Do not store heavy items on top of bookshelves and cabinets.
- Store heavier items on lower shelves and the heaviest items near mid-height to minimize bending and overexertion.
- Do not block fire extinguishers, exit doors, fire alarms, or sprinkler heads (keep clear below 18 inches to allow proper flow pattern).
- Always de-energize equipment by pulling the plug from the receptacle. Do not run extension cords through

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doorways, walking paths, or under carpets. Take damaged electrical cords, plugs, or receptacles out of service (or tagging) and report to supervision.

- Promptly clean up spills, especially when they are on tile, hardwood, and sealed concrete.
- Maintain good housekeeping in the office area. Minimize storage and keep walkways free from obstructions.
- Never open two file cabinet drawers at the same time. This could result in a tipping hazard of the file cabinet.

### 3 Slips, Trips, & Falls

Slips, trips, and falls are common accidents in all work environments. Here are a few ways of prevention for these incidents:

- Focusing on the task of walking and being aware of surroundings. Looking for stairways, curbs, speed bumps, changes in surface or elevations can all prevent these incidents.
- Using ladders or stepladders properly and ensuring they are set up properly before use are critical to avoid falls from height. Make sure the ladder is labelled. Follow the directions on the labelling.
- Parking lots can have many different hazards – curbs, gravel, oil patches or a combination accompanied by inclement weather. If not aware of what others are doing around us and where walking, slips, trips, and falls can occur.
- Using handrails walking up or down stairs is very important, especially during inclement weather. Keep one hand free for the handrail when walking stairs.
- Using caution when walking. Avoid pushing or hurrying and provide sufficient time to reach destination.

- Avoiding the use of cellular phone while walking. Texting distracts its user from surrounding environment and is one of the major causes of slips, trips, and falls.
- Reporting all unsafe conditions to supervision or the [Office of Campus Safety – Shared Services](#).

### 4 Fire Safety

Remember what to do in case of a fire. If aware of a fire, activate the nearest alarm pull station. Then evacuate the building in accordance with the building evacuation plan. Call 911.

Only attempt to control the fire with a fire extinguisher if properly trained.

Many fires start from electronic devices. Do not plug power strips into extension cords or into other power strips. Anything that heats, cooks, or cools, such as space heaters or refrigerators, must be plugged into a permanent wall outlet.

Do not prop open fire doors. These doors are used to contain the fire and are held open by magnetic door stops. The magnets will release when the fire alarm activates.

Do not allow clutter to build up in hallways or other routes of egress. Clutter not only makes it more difficult to evacuate, but it also hinders fire fighters who may enter the building during the fire. Smoke lowers visibility and obscures objects, such as chairs or push carts. Emergency personnel could trip and become injured from these obstacles during a fire.

### 5 Hand Tool Safety

Hand tools are non-powered tools. They include axes, wrenches, hammers, chisels, screw drivers, and other hand-operated mechanisms. Even though hand-tool injuries tend to be less severe than power-tool injuries, hand-tool

injuries are more common. The most common hand-tool accidents are caused by the following:

- Failure to use the right tool
- Failure to use a tool correctly
- Failure to keep edged tools sharp
- Failure to replace or repair a defective tool
- Failure to store tools safely

Follow these guidelines for general hand-tool safety:

- Wear safety glasses whenever hammering or cutting, especially when working with surfaces that chip or splinter
- Do not use a screwdriver as a chisel
- Do not use a chisel as a screwdriver
- Do not use a knife as a screwdriver
- Never carry a screwdriver or chisel in a pocket. Use a tool belt holder or tool box
- Replace loose, splintered, or cracked handles. Loose hammer, axe, or maul heads can fly off defective handles
- Use the proper wrench to tighten or loosen nuts
- When using a chisel, always chip or cut away from the body. Use a soft-headed hammer or mallet to strike a wooden chisel handle. A metal hammer or mallet may cause the handle to split
- Do not use a wrench if the jaws are sprung
- Do not use impact tools, such as chisels, wedges, or drift pins, if their heads are mushroomed. The heads may shatter upon impact
- Direct saw blades, knives, or other tools away from aisle areas and other employees
- Keep knives and scissors sharp. Dull tools are more dangerous than sharp tools
- Iron- or steel-hand tools may cause sparks and be hazardous around flammable substances. Use spark-resistant tools made from brass, plastic, aluminium,

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or wood when working around flammable hazards

Improper tool storage is responsible for many shop accidents. Follow these guidelines to ensure proper tool storage:

- Have a specific place for each tool
- Do not place unguarded cutting tools in a drawer. Many hand injuries are caused by rummaging through drawers that contain a jumbled assortment of sharp-edged tools
- Store knives or chisels in the scabbards
- Hang saws with the blades away from someone's reach
- Provide sturdy hooks to hang most tools on
- Rack heavy tools, such as axes and sledges, with the heavy end down

## **6 EHS Specialist – Shared Services**

Welcome Tracielynn Walters to the Shared Services group. As the EHS Specialist, Tracielynn will focus on building and laboratory safety inspections for all colleges. She will also be responsible for building asset inventory and inspections, fire safety, chemical safety, and occupational safety. She will also be available for safety training.

Tracielynn's contact information will be published in the August newsletter.