
Course Learning Outcomes for Unit VIII

Upon completion of this unit, students should be able to:

5. Examine key management approaches for addressing workplace ergonomics issues.
 - 5.1 Examine managerial strategies that can be used to reduce potential hazards.
7. Recommend ergonomically sound control strategies for workplace situations.
 - 7.1 Recommend strategies for improving the safety of the employees.

Reading Assignment

Chapter 16: Case Studies

Unit Lesson

Well, here we are; the course is nearing completion, and you will soon have another Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) course behind you in your pursuit of your degree. We only have a couple more hurdles here to finish — the first being the reading of the case studies found in Chapter 16. You may also want to spend some time with the appendices found after the last chapter.

After reviewing this unit's materials, make certain to review your grades so far. Make sure that you have completed all of the other units and have received a grade for them. It would be terrible if you thought everything was good when, in fact, there was an issue. The Unit VIII Course Project will also be due this unit. For the Unit VIII Project, you will be required to submit a PowerPoint presentation based upon the work you completed in Units IV and VII. Specific instructions will be provided in the syllabus. Please make sure that you read them carefully.

Let us now review some of the things we have completed up to this point in the course. Each chapter of the textbook presented a different ergonomics-related topic. The course materials also provided a number of examples to align with these various topics, and we relied on our hypothetical employees, Amy and Adam, to help apply some of the key points presented in the materials to jobs that most people have some familiarity with. Most people have had a car serviced, and most people have shopped at a big-box store. Not everyone who takes this course is a career safety person. Some of you may be truck drivers, waitresses, or stay-at-home parents. Hopefully, some of the examples provided in the unit lessons helped you to relate to the materials and helped you to consider the various steps involved in evaluating workstations and recommending ergonomic controls for a given job.

We have yet to consider implementation of recommended controls, however. Strangely enough, this can sometimes be one of the most difficult aspects of providing employees with a safe and helpful workplace. This is because people make up organizations and subsequently need to be considered when it comes to developing and implementing any organizational change effort. Organizational research has shown that employee involvement is not only tied to successful change efforts but to organizational effectiveness (Amah & Ahiauzu, 2013). This includes change efforts that deal with worker safety and health. Not every employee will necessarily have a desire to follow new protocols related to safety and health in the workplace. For instance, Amy's new \$100 shoes that are designed to make standing more bearable may not align with her fashion sense, and calling for assistance to maneuver heavier items at the checkout counter may seem like more of a nuisance to her than what it is worth; Amy may not want to anger grumpy customers by slowing down the line. Likewise, Adam may forego utilizing some of the materials handling carts, which were purchased to help him and other employees to move tires and batteries around the shop, because they are too time consuming to hunt down and use.

The tendency for employees not to follow newly implemented safety and health measures, which includes proper application of ergonomics-related controls, can be problematic and frustrating to the person who oversees the safety program at any facility or jobsite. Getting employees to follow the rules is not always an easy thing to do. Oftentimes, a given safety-related practice may interfere with productivity or may be perceived as a nuisance or an interruption to the employees' daily routine that has otherwise remained the same for years. So what is an OSH practitioner to do?

Generally, there are three approaches to getting employees to comply. The first is to set up a safety and health program (including an ergonomics program), which documents policies and procedures that require compliance with safety rules. Such a program would require job hazard analysis, implementation of controls and work rules, training, and disciplinary procedures for noncompliance. A final step of this approach would require a periodic review of the program. This is a traditional compliance approach to safety in the workplace. Indeed, if an employer is cited by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) for a standard violation, and the employer chooses to argue that the employee was at fault for not following the company's safety rules, the OSHA compliance officer will check to see if such a program exists at the facility or site and if employees are consistently disciplined for noncompliance. If all of these elements are not in place, then a citation may be forthcoming. It is one thing to have a written program on the shelf, but it is quite another to fully implement such a program.

Of course, forcing employees to comply with rules does not necessarily ensure that employees will always go along with what is expected. The compliance model only ensures that employees will make an effort not to get caught. There is often nothing to prevent employees from removing safety glasses or not using the new lifting device when the safety supervisor has moved on to inspect other departments.

The second approach for getting employees to comply with safety and health-related expectations employs an approach to get employees to actually want to follow the rules by appealing to human psychology. One of the best ways to go about doing this is through the implementation of a safety and health management system that includes a high level of commitment by top managers along with a high degree of employee involvement in all phases of the safety program's development, implementation, and continuous improvement processes. Such an approach obviously includes hazard recognition and control efforts, training, and program effectiveness evaluation.

This second approach is consistent with what has come to be known as a safety and health management system, and many of OSHA's ergonomics-related recommendations for specific industries utilize this approach (OSHA, n.d.). It is important for top managers to be highly committed to such an endeavor so that employees clearly recognize that safety and health are core values of the organization and that shortcuts should not be taken when it comes to worker safety and health. Employee involvement is also crucial to the success of such an approach. When people have an opportunity to provide input in how to best do their jobs safely, they are much more likely to follow through with implementing the controls. This is because the frontline employee typically understands his or her job better than anybody and, oftentimes, can offer the best solution to a given problem. Also, participation in the process also results in employees buying into the solution because they are allowed to be a part of the solution rather than having a solution that may or may not work forced upon them.

Such systems are based on the total quality management (TQM) model, and standards have been developed by a number of organizations such as the American National Standards Institute, the International Standards Organization, and even OSHA to help employers implement such an approach in their organizations (Pardy & Andrews, 2010). Other psychologically based approaches involve behavior-based safety systems, which are often used by organizations with more sophisticated safety and health management systems that involve a behavior reward system for safe behaviors noted by an observer (often a coworker) (Pardy & Andrews, 2010).

Of course, these latter approaches have books written about them, and it would be difficult to do them justice in a few short paragraphs, but you will certainly run across these approaches elsewhere in CSU's OSH program. Suffice it to say that much attention has been paid to overcoming unsafe behavior in the workplace and that there are opportunities out there for the safety practitioner who is grappling with the issue of getting employees to follow the rules.

We have come to the end of our final unit lesson. In this course, you have had an opportunity to learn a great deal about ergonomics, and hopefully you will be able to apply much of what has been learned to your workplace. In this last unit, you will also have an opportunity to apply key ergonomics-related concepts to the workplace scenario that you have dealt with in the previous two units by putting together a PowerPoint presentation. Before you submit it, picture yourself in the audience, and see how the presentation flows. This presentation needs to be both entertaining and enlightening. Capture the audience right out of the gate, and keep them engaged throughout the entire presentation. You have been in classes before or in presentations where you fell asleep in the first five minutes or have completely tuned out within the first two slides. You have the power to make a difference here with this presentation. Make it yours, and make it wonderful. Have others look and listen to your presentation. Get a lot of feedback, and make any appropriate changes before you submit. You are capable of putting together a well thought-out presentation!

References

- Amah, E., & Ahiauzu, A. (2013). Employee involvement and organizational effectiveness. *The Journal of Management Development*, 32(7), 661-674.
- Occupational Safety & Health Administration. (n.d.). Prevention of musculoskeletal disorders in the workplace. Retrieved from <https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/ergonomics/index.html>
- Pardy, W., & Andrews, T. (2010). *Integrated management systems: Leading strategies and solutions*. Plymouth, United Kingdom: Government Institutes.

Learning Activities (Nongraded)

Nongraded Learning Activities are provided to aid students in their course of study. You do not have to submit them. If you have questions, contact your instructor for further guidance and information.

After reading the Unit VIII Lesson and the required reading, consider visiting the Occupational Safety and Health Administration webpage (<http://www.osha.gov>) and searching for the General Duty Clause, Section 5(a)(1) and 5(b) of the Occupational Safety and Health Act. Then, consider how you could apply the underlying intent of this section of the act in your career as a safety professional.