

00-06: Washington Department of Labor and Industries Ergonomics Rule



Pacific Maritime Association

Accident Prevention Department
550 California Street, P. O. Box 7861
San Francisco, California 94120-7861

SAFETY BULLETIN 00-6

June 15, 2000

Washington Department of Labor and Industries Ergonomics Rule

INFORMATION

The purpose of this Safety Bulletin is to outline the new Washington State Department of Labor and Industries (WISHA) Ergonomics rule that was published on May 26, 2000. This new rule addresses Work Related Musculoskeletal Disorders (WRMSD) Prevention. WISHA developed their own Ergonomics program despite the pending Federal OSHA Regulations. The Marine Cargo Handling Industry is not exempt from this new rule. Public Rule development conferences were held around the state in October 1998. An advisory committee was formed early in 1998 to assist in the development of these rules. The Proposed Rule was published on November 15, 1999 and Final Rule was published on May 26, 2000.

This rule differs significantly from both the California and the Federal approach in that WISHA Regulations outline actions, movements or a level of effort performed in the workplace that define "Caution Zone Jobs" (CZJ). WISHA Rules do not require a WRMSD to trigger the requirements of the regulation. If, after analysis, a company has a job that requires actions, movements or a level of effort that falls within the CZJ description, then the company must initiate an ergonomics program even if there have been no diagnosed WRMSDs.

The rule has eight key elements:

- 1, The rule only applies to employers with "Caution Zone Jobs," those where any employee's typical work includes physical risk factors specified in the rule. The rule contains specified physical risk factor tables which include: awkward posture, high hand force, repeated impact, heavy frequent or awkward lifting, moderate to high hand-arm vibrations or highly repetitive motions. CZJs are not prohibited, and they may not be hazardous.
- 2, Employers with CZJs must ensure that employees working in or supervising these jobs receive ergonomics awareness education initially and once every three years thereafter. These employers also must analyze the caution zone jobs to determine if they have hazards.
- 3, Employers may choose their own method and criteria for identifying and reducing WRMSD hazards or may use WISHA's specified criteria.
- 4, If Jobs are found to have WRMSD hazards, the employer must reduce exposures below hazardous levels or to the extent technologically and economically feasible.

5, Employers must provide for and encourage employee participation.

6, An extended implementation schedule based on industry type and employer size allows employers, time to prepare for compliance. For the Marine Cargo Handling Industry, the dates are July 1, 2003 to conduct job site analysis and conduct hazard awareness training and July 1, 2004 to implement any hazard reduction actions.

7, WISHA will assist employers and employees in implementing the rule by developing guides, models, identifying industry best practices, and by conducting demonstration projects.

8, Employers may continue to use effective methods of reducing WRMSD hazards that were in place before the rule adoption date as long as the methods, taken as a whole, are as effective as the requirements of the rule.

The rule does not include any requirements for the medical management of WRMSDs or change any requirements for handling industrial insurance claims. An employer will not be in violation of this rule solely because an employee develops a WRMSD or related symptom.

ACTION

Employers conducting operations in Washington state should note this new regulation and take action as deemed appropriate. In particular, employers should note the compliance deadlines. Large ("non-highest-risk") employers with greater than 50 employees (our industry) must complete the Job Site Hazard Analysis and conduct Hazard Awareness Training by July 1, 2003. Hazard Reduction actions must be completed by July 1, 2004.

The complete rule including the appendix tables describing CZJ thresholds is available on line at WISHA's web site at <http://www.wa.gov>. In addition, copies may be obtained from PMA Washington and Oregon Area Training and Accident Prevention offices.