UMBC Environmental Safety and Health

Ergonomics Program

PURPOSE AND SCOPE:

This procedure is designed to promote the health and safety of University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC) employees through the evaluation, identification, and control of ergonomic hazards in the workplace.

PROCEDURE:

Ergonomics is an applied science that is concerned with designing and arranging the equipment and tools that people use, so that the people can interact with their tools and equipment safely and efficiently. In other words, ergonomics focuses on fitting the task to the person, rather than forcing the person to fit themselves to the task. Proper ergonomics is critical to a healthy, safe, and efficient workplace, whether it is in an office environment, a lab, a warehouse, or any other setting.

Ergonomic hazards can cause wear and tear on the body and cause potentially life-altering musculoskeletal injuries. These injuries often occur slowly and over a long period of time. Examples of ergonomic risk factors include repetitive motion, contact stress, application of force (such as pushing, pulling, or lifting), static or stationary postures, and awkward postures.

Workplace Ergonomic Evaluations

It is the goal of the Environmental Safety and Health (ESH) department and UMBC to promote a healthy and safe work environment that is free from recognized ergonomic hazards. To achieve this, ergonomic hazards must be identified so that appropriate control measures can be implemented.

If an employee has concerns regarding the ergonomics of their work area, or if they are experiencing ergonomic discomfort at their workstation, they should notify their manager and complete an Ergonomic Survey Request Form on the UMBC ESH Department website (https://umbc-esh.com/ergonomicSurveyRequest.cfm). Safety concerns or unsafe conditions can additionally be reported by emailing esh@umbc.edu or by calling the office at 410-455-2918 during university business hours.

Ergonomic evaluation requests that are related to a diagnosed health condition or disability that is not work-related should also include the Office of Accessibility and Disability Services. Requests for accommodations can be submitted through their department website (https://accessibility.umbc.edu/).

Additionally, ESH may initiate an ergonomic evaluation after observation of an activity or condition that presents potential ergonomic hazards, as well as following an accident or near-miss that presents possible ergonomic concerns.

Controlling Ergonomic Hazards

Following an ergonomic evaluation, ESH will provide the employee and their supervisor with a report of findings and recommendations for measures to control identified ergonomic risk factors. ESH will also facilitate or assist with implementation of recommended measures.

Depending on the hazards identified and the work being performed, the measures that are recommended will vary. Examples of control measures may include introducing new equipment that reduces ergonomic strain when performing a task, modifying the flow of work being performed (such as rotating to different tasks), adjusting an employee's chair to improve posture, or rearranging items at an employee's workstation so that frequently used equipment is within easier reach.

ESH will assist departments with selection and ordering of any new equipment. It should be noted, however, that any equipment that is purchased will be charged to the department that will use said equipment. This includes office furniture and accessories such as chairs, keyboard trays, and footrests. Depending on the nature and outcome of the evaluation, ESH may also request that an employee provide a note from their licensed primary healthcare provider indicating a medical need or recommendation for the equipment.

ESH may perform follow up evaluations as necessary to ensure any adjustments or modifications to the work area are effective.