



THE GEORGE
WASHINGTON
UNIVERSITY
WASHINGTON DC

Responsible University Official:
Senior Associate Vice President of
Safety and Security
Responsible Office: Environmental
Health and Safety
Origination Date: September 30, 2002

ERGONOMICS POLICY

Policy Statement

It is the policy of The George Washington University to improve the comfort and well-being of employees by identifying and correcting ergonomic risk factors in the workplace. The university’s [Ergonomic Program](#) was developed to effectively identify and prevent work-related musculoskeletal disorders through engineering, equipment, proper work practices, and administrative controls.

Reason for Policy/Purpose

Work-related musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) can result when there is a mismatch between the physical capacity of workers and their equipment and the physical demands of their job. According to the Occupational Safety & Health Administration (OSHA), each year 1.8 million workers in the United States report work-related MSDs such as carpal tunnel syndrome, tendonitis, and back injuries. About 600,000 MSDs each year are serious enough to prevent employees from working. Ergonomics can provide a solution to many of these injuries.

Who Needs to Know This Policy

Faculty and staff

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Policy/Procedures

Proper application of ergonomic principles can help to reduce the risk of injuries or illnesses for employees working with computers, in laboratories, or in jobs involving repetitive motions and handling of heavy materials.

The university's [Ergonomic Program](#) promotes employee health and comfort through training, consultation, and written recommendations. The Office of Environmental Health and Safety is responsible for informing affected employees about work-related MSDs and associated risk factors, and encouraging employee involvement in promoting an ergonomically sound workplace.

The primary tools of the university's [Ergonomic Program](#) include training and information, symptom analysis, and workstation evaluations and recommendations. Employees seeking information on ergonomics should visit the Office of Environmental Health and Safety ergonomics webpage for more information. This page includes information on training programs that will help employees identify ergonomic risk factors in their work areas, as well as possible remedies.

Employees may request an in-person ergonomic assessment of their workstation by filling out an ergonomic symptom survey, which is located on the Environmental Health and Safety website, or by contacting safety@gwu.edu. Requests will be submitted to the Office of Environmental Health and Safety. Once a symptom survey is completed, an evaluation can be scheduled. No evaluations will be performed without the knowledge of the employee's immediate supervisor.

The Office of Environmental Health and Safety will provide written recommendations to the employee, as well as his or her supervisor, which will outline possible alterations to the workstation. The purpose of the evaluation and written report are to eliminate ergonomic problems that may lead to musculoskeletal disorders, and to address MSDs already present. Only employees experiencing ergonomic difficulties should request an evaluation.

The written report provided by the Office of Environmental Health and Safety may include but are not limited to suggested products, such as keyboard trays or ergonomically designed chairs. Purchasing suggested products is both the decision and responsibility of the evaluated employee's department.

This policy supports the procedures set forth by the university's [Ergonomic Program](#), available from the Office of Environmental Health and Safety.

ERGONOMICS POLICY

Forms / Instructions

[Employee Ergonomic Symptoms Survey](#)
[Ergonomic Evaluation Form](#)

Website Address for This Policy

[GW University Policies](#)

Contacts

Subject	Contact	Telephone	Email Address
Ergonomics	Environmental Health and Safety	202-994-4347	safety@gwu.edu

Definitions

Ergonomics	Fitting the workplace to the worker, and examining the interaction between the worker and his or her environment.
Musculoskeletal Disorder	A disorder of the muscles, nerves, tendons, ligaments, joints, cartilage, blood vessels, or spinal discs, usually as a result of repetitive motion that places inordinate strain on the body.

Related Information

[OSHA: Ergonomics Guidelines](#)

Who Approved This Policy

Louis H. Katz, Executive Vice President and Treasurer
Beth Nolan, Senior Vice President and General Counsel

History/Revision Dates

Origination Date: September 30, 2002

Last Amended Date: May 1, 2006

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Next Review Date: May 31, 2013