



# Safety News

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Safety Consulting

February 1, 2010

## Two Dozen Tips to Reduce Ergonomic-Related Injuries

Source: Safety Exchange Ken Oswald

As most safety professionals know, injuries related to ergonomics are those caused by over-use, impact, vibration, repetition and forceful exertion. These injuries can be reduced by improvements in equipment and work practices.

Here are some quick and easy work practices you can share with your workers to help them reduce their risk of ergonomic-related injuries.

1. If you can see the imprint of your watch on your wrist, the band is too tight and you may be causing damage to your wrist. Loosen the band.
2. Grab a large rubber band and put it around all your fingertips, cup your hand so your fingertips are touching each other. Now use the force of the rubber band and try to spread your fingers out as wide as possible. Repeat 10 times with each hand 3 to 5 times a day. This will strengthen your inner hand ligaments and tendons.
3. While driving use cruise control if possible and weather permitting. It will take the pressure off the right side of your body, your accelerator and brake pad side.
4. For those who sit at a computer all day, check that your body is properly aligned when typing; align the "B" key on your keyboard with your belly button (only on standard keyboard designs)
5. A footrest will not only support your feet, it also helps support your back. But it should only be enough to raise your knees to slightly above your hips.
6. When working at the computer for a long period of time, force yourself to yawn. This both moistens your eyes and reduces the tension by relaxing and exercising your facial muscles.
7. Use the 20-20-20 rule, When working at the computer for a long time, take a break every 20 minutes and look at an object at least 20 feet away for at least 20 seconds.
8. Have a lot of stuff on your desk? Place the items you use most frequently closest to you to avoid repeated extended reaches.
9. Do you sometimes wear a backpack? Check its weight. The weight of a backpack should not exceed 15 percent of your weight. Exceeding this increases your risk of back injury.
10. Avoid daily activities that place the arm above shoulder level. This will significantly decrease the risk of a shoulder injury.
11. When placing items on shelves, store the heaviest items on the middle shelves and the lightest objects on the top and bottom shelves.
12. Design or modify your workstation so that all lifts are in the lifting strike zone (i.e., the beginning and end of your lift are between mid-thigh and chest level and close to your body at all times).
13. What difference do a couple of inches make? Your back works at least 30 percent harder when you lift a 25-pound item 4 inches away from your body versus holding it close to your body.
14. Lift with your legs—they are designed to provide a mechanical advantage to the body. Lifting with the back places the body at a mechanical disadvantage.
15. When lifting, break larger loads into smaller, lighter loads. Repetition is better than heavier weights.
16. Use manual movement devices such as carts, dollies, or forklifts to move items, even if it takes longer to perform the task.

Thomas Osterholz  
Safety Consulting Manager

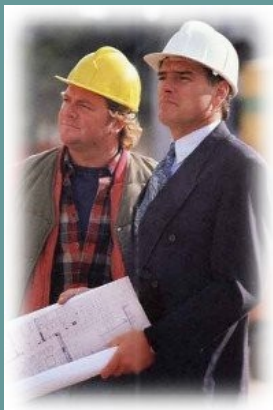
(800) 491-8856, ext. 1332  
tosterholz@tricornet.com

Mary Schoettel  
Safety Consultant

(800) 397-3351, ext. 1534  
mschoettel@tricornet.com

Alyssa Moen  
Safety Consultant

(800) 491-8856, ext. 1331  
amoen@tricornet.com



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Safety Consulting Manager

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## "It's All About You"

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17. Plan the lift ahead of time especially if there is more than one lifter.
18. Always position yourself in front of an object being lifted to reduce reaching or twisting.
19. Pushing is the easiest form of manual material handling. Try to convert lifting and lowering activities to pushes.
20. Try to use hand tools that are as light as functionally possible. It will reduce the amount of force needed to operate the tool.
21. For heavier hand tools, ensure two hand use.
22. Bent angled tools are not necessarily ergonomically designed. Match the task being performed with the right tool so that the wrist is not bent.
23. Hand tool handles should be compressible and stay captive in the hand. Otherwise the hands and fingers are subject to pain due to soft tissue damage and reduced blood circulation.
24. Glove selection is important. Wear work gloves that fit, are flexible and come with grips. Otherwise extra effort is needed to perform tasks.

### Conclusion

And here's a final ergonomics tip for you: quit smoking. What does smoking have to do with ergonomics? Smokers have higher back injury and carpal tunnel syndrome rates than non-smokers.

### DOT announces federal ban on texting for CMV drivers

U.S Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood announced federal guidance to expressly prohibit texting by drivers of commercial vehicles such as large trucks and buses. The prohibition is effective immediately and is the latest in a series of actions taken by the Department to combat distracted driving since the Secretary convened a national summit on the issue last September.

"We want the drivers of big rigs and buses and those who share the roads with them to be safe," said Secretary LaHood. "This is an important safety step and we will be taking more to eliminate the threat of distracted driving."

The action is the result of the Department's interpretation of standing rules. **Truck and bus drivers who text while driving commercial vehicles may be subject to civil or criminal penalties of up to \$2,750.**

"Our regulations will help prevent unsafe activity within the cab," said Anne Ferro, Administrator for the FMCSA. "We want to make it crystal clear to operators and their employers that texting while driving is the type of unsafe activity that these regulations are intended to prohibit."

FMCSA research shows that drivers who send and receive text messages take their eyes off the road for an average of 4.6 seconds out of every 6 seconds while texting. At 55 miles per hour, this means that the driver is traveling the length of a football field, including the end zones, without looking at the road. Drivers who text while driving are more than 20 times more likely to get in an accident than non-distracted drivers. Because of the safety risks associated with the use of electronic devices while driving, FMCSA is also working on additional regulatory measures that will be announced in the coming months.

During the September 2009 Distracted Driving Summit, the Secretary announced the Department's plan to pursue this regulatory action, as well as rulemakings to reduce the risks posed by distracted driving. President Obama also signed an Executive Order directing federal employees not to engage in text messaging while driving government-owned vehicles or with government-owned equipment. Federal employees were required to comply with the ban starting on December 30, 2009.

The regulatory guidance will be on public display in the *Federal Register* January 26 and will appear in print in the *Federal Register* on January 27.

The public can follow the progress of the U.S. Department of Transportation in working to combat distracted driving: [www.distraction.gov](http://www.distraction.gov).



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(800) 491-8856, ext. 1332  
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Safety Consultant

(800) 397-3351, ext. 1534  
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Alyssa Moen  
Safety Consultant

(800) 491-8856, ext. 1331  
amoen@tricornet.com



*"It's All About You"*

## Bad Hearing Protection Assumptions Hurt Hearing

Source: Safety Smart Weekly Briefing



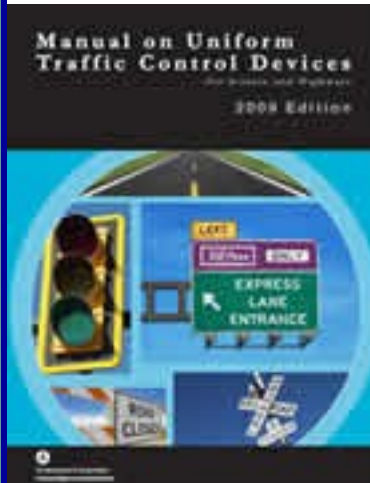
Making inaccurate assumptions about hearing protection can hurt workers' hearing, according to Brad Witt, director of hearing conservation for Howard Leight/Sperian Hearing Protection LLC.

Witt, past president of the National Hearing Conservation Association, has written a white paper on six bad assumptions that he says "can torpedo an otherwise healthy hearing conservation program and leave the door open for hearing loss among workers exposed to hazardous noise."

Here are his six bad assumptions:

1. Hearing protection is self-explanatory.
2. Any earplug in the ear is blocking some noise.
3. An earplug positioned halfway in the ear blocks about half the noise.
4. Cut the Noise Reduction Rating (NRR) in half to predict real-world protection.
5. There's no way to measure real attenuation on a worker wearing earplugs.
6. There's no way to measure the noise dose of a worker under the hearing protectors (at the eardrums) throughout the workday.

Read the white paper [here](#):



## DOT releases updated MUTCD; road safety to be strengthened

As part of a continuing effort to improve safety on the nation's roads and bridges, the Department of Transportation released a comprehensive update to the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD), which states must adopt as their legal state standard for traffic control devices within two years.

The MUTCD is the national standard for all traffic control devices, including traffic signs, pavement markings, signals and any other devices used to regulate, warn or guide traffic. Ensuring uniformity of traffic control devices across the nation – from their messages and placement to their sizes, shapes and colors – helps to reduce crashes and traffic congestion. The MUTCD also provides guidance on the safety of flaggers and others who work in traffic.

The MUTCD's 2009 edition features many new and updated requirements, ranging from changes in highway signs and bike lanes to the color of high-visibility garments worn by road workers. According to the National Transportation Safety Board it represents the largest number of recommendations adopted by the MUTCD at one time.

"Safety is this Department's top priority," said U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood. "These new and updated standards will help make our nation's roads and bridges safer for drivers, construction workers, and pedestrians alike."

For an overview of the new rules and recommendations, visit <http://mutcd.fhwa.dot.gov>.