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# Workplace Ergonomics, Worth The Cost?

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Companies whose employees spend the majority of their day typing will be thrilled to review the results of two major studies researching the relationship between typing and the development of carpal tunnel syndrome. The studies, including one published by the Mayo Clinic and one by the Journal of American Medical Association, have shown that it is unlikely that typing, even for several hours every day, will cause carpal tunnel syndrome.

Still, studies like these cause employers to think more about ergonomics, or the use of science and biomechanics to create safer work environments. More and more employers have begun implementing ergonomic research into industrial and corporate workplaces both to increase productivity and to reduce musculoskeletal and cumulative trauma disorders.

Of course, employers need to make individualized ergonomic decisions based the size of the business and the level of risk to which their employees are exposed. For a smaller business, it may be beneficial to hire an ergonomic consultant. An ergonomic evaluation would include observing the employee as he or she performs the functions of his or her job. For instance, in a corporate environment, the consultant would evaluate the way an employee sits, types and moves around his or her workspace and would then make recommendations as to simple adjustments and/or items which may protect the employee from injury. However, a large industrial facility may want to train someone to do ergonomic evaluations in-house as it may be more economically feasible.

But is the benefit to employers worth the cost? Probably so, especially when considering the potential cost *of not* incorporating ergonomic principles in the workplace. Ergonomic adjustments may not only prevent injuries, workers' compensation claims and OSHA violations, but also may increase employee morale and productivity.

**About the author:** Lori Allen is a member of the firm's workers' compensation team who represents employers and insurers throughout all stages of litigation. For questions about this article, please contact Lori.

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