

The Productive Workplace

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Pelletier & Associates Awarded Ergonomic Services Contract for the City of Los Angeles

By DIANA PELLETIER



Pelletier & Associates is happy to announce its selection as ergonomics service provider for the City of Los Angeles. This contract focuses on the provision of on-site ergonomic evaluations to employees of all departments of the City at both seated workstations and in non-seated work

environments. A variety of ergonomics evaluation services are to be provided including worksite audits, training and assistance with return-to-work service and workers' compensation cases. Pelletier & Associates' proprietary ergonomics tracking software will also be provided to the City to assist in managing the complexity of these services and to provide the City with much needed metrics on risk reduction and ergonomic program effectiveness.

Staying Active in the EH&S Community

Pelletier & Associates continues to be a presence at various EH&S events throughout Southern California and supports industry groups, especially during this difficult economy. On March 12th Pelletier & Associates was happy to sponsor the luncheon at the annual PARMA/PASMA joint meeting held at the JPIA in La Palma. This was a very large and popular event, bringing together Health and Safety professionals from throughout Southern California.

On March 18th, Diana Pelletier presented a workshop session at the Orange County ASSE/AIHA Professional Development Conference held at the Anaheim Park Hotel in Fullerton. Her topic "Sustaining Ergonomic Programs in an Economic Slowdown" is very popular this year and followed many of the same findings as the lunchtime keynote speaker. James Borreti, who is on the Council on Professional Affairs for ASSE National, spoke on the topic of Challenges for 2009 for EH&S professionals, and much of this information focused on the need for our industry to become more business savvy. By bringing health and safety issues to the attention of business leaders we can show that health and safety can affect an organization's bottom line. Gathering metrics with a purpose can help an organization demonstrate value and cost savings in this very crucial business cycle.

On March 24th Pelletier & Associates attended the Pacific Southwest Safety Conference at the Handlery Hotel in San Diego. At this event, Pelletier & Associates was able to showcase our products and services in the Exhibit area and had an opportunity to meet with EH&S professionals from the San Diego area. We look forward to continuing our professional networking and educational opportunities in the coming months!

No Cost Office Ergonomics

By MICHAEL GONZALES

A Recession Brings Uncomfortable Times, but They Don't Have to Be Physically Uncomfortable.



Being ergonomically correct doesn't mean spending a fortune on ergonomic products. Many little to no cost ergonomic solutions can be just as effective as the expensive commercial counterparts. Here are some common low cost/homemade solutions that won't break the bank:

The computer monitor is too low

A computer monitor that sits too low may contribute to unnecessary neck flexion during use. Most monitor stands offer height adjustability, allowing the employee to raise their monitor for an optimal viewing height. Beware of any locking mechanisms featured in some adjustable stands; they may give false perception immobility.

Homemade Solution: A monitor that lacks adequate height can always be raised by placing items underneath. A ream of paper, a large book, or a thick catalog, can all be great substitutes for a monitor riser.

The computer monitor is too high

When a monitor is too high for an individual, excessive extension at the neck may be a result. Again, check the monitor stand for adjustability. If the adjustable stand can be lowered do so.

Homemade Solution: Be sure that the monitor is not sitting on top of a CPU or any product that may raise the height of the monitor. If you must relocate the CPU place it in a destination that does not impede the employee's leg room.

The computer monitor reflects glare

Glare often makes it difficult to see the screen comfortably. Eye strain or fatigue is a common symptom of reflective glare.

Homemade Solution: If shining sunlight through the window causes a glare problem, reorient the screen perpendicular to the light source. Vertical blinds are best for allowing in the natural light and still redirecting lighting angles. If overhead lights are too bright, consider removing one bulb to reduce the brightness.

Non-neutral head postures when referencing documents

Referencing documents from the desktop may result in excessive neck flexion when looking down. To achieve neutral head posture, it is best to prop any referenced documentation up at an angle in and directly inline with monitor.

Homemade Solution: Place the documents on a clipboard and prop it against a thick book or object. Place tape on the bottom edge of the clipboard and the book can be slid back and forth to increase or decrease the angle.

Feet do not touch the ground while seated

A lack of lower body support may redistribute pressure to the lower back or lumbar. The lack of a footrest may also cause the development of bad habits such as crossing legs or planting feet.

Homemade Solution: A small box or phonebook can be placed underneath the feet of the employee to provide additional support to the lower extremities.

The desk is too high

Working at too high of a desk may contribute to a variety of awkward postures and stresses. Awkward reaching postures may be common for individuals attempting to access their input devices. Contact stress at the hands and/or wrists may also result if the employee's chair lacks the adequate height for work on the desktop.

Homemade Solution: Check the current height adjustments to the employee's chair. If the chair can rise higher, adjust accordingly. (Caution- If after the adjustment, the employee's feet fail to touch the ground see above). A small pillow or seat cushion can also be placed underneath the employee, ideally rising the height at which they sit. A more permanent solution would be to cut the legs of the desk lowering it to an appropriate level for the employee. The goal is to allow the employee to access his or her input devices equal to elbow level while seated.

The back rest/lumbar is uncomfortable

The backrest of the seat should snugly fit to the contours of the body. A lack of lower body support may lead to unwanted pressure placed on the lumbar region of the back. Slouching and slumping behaviors may also result from unsupported sitting posture.

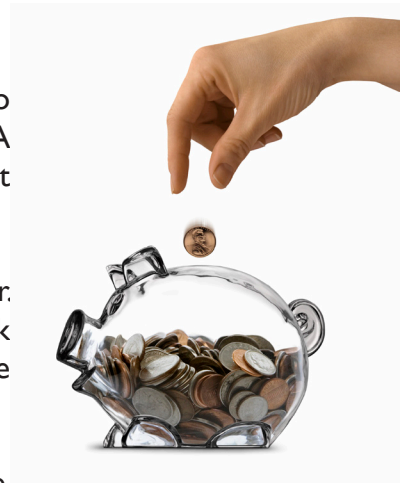
Homemade Solution: Roll a small hand towel into a comfortable shape and tape it to the back rest of the chair. The homemade support should sit in the small of the employee's back.

The seat pan is too deep

The seat of the chair should fully support the upper legs and hips while allowing a two to three finger space between the employee's upper calf and the edge of the chair. A seat pan that is too deep may result in contact stress at the legs and the inability to sit fully back in a chair.

Homemade Solution: Place additional padding on the back rest of the employee's chair. A seat cushion, pillow, or folded blanket can all work as a filler, to supply better back support while seated. Be sure that the filler features the same height and width as the chair's backrest and does not take away from its contours.

Note: These are merely suggestions with the intent of providing a comforting workplace. Each individual has unique conditions and by no means should this be taken as medical advice.





Free or Low-Cost Training Options

By DIANA PELLETIER

In today's economy, employers are all aware of the need to provide services to their employees, but struggle with funding. There are a variety of methods to offer to your employees to help provide them with some basic ergonomic training when money is tight. Following are some free or very low cost options for training.

- *Provide Ergo Tip Cards*

Create a simple ergo tip card on index cards or cardstock paper that you can hand out to employees when you visit them. Making the card small with three or four of the most common issues you find in your environment will help your employees keep this information top of mind.

- *Use your company website to offer ergo information*

Many companies provide space for safety and health information on their websites; create an ergo section with very simple ideas on equipment usage and adjustments.

- *Vendor lunch and learn programs*

Ask your equipment vendors if they would be willing to come in and conduct a short lunch and learn training. Chair adjustment workshops or how to use a particular tool properly are some great options.

- *Provide e-tips through email*

Send information to your employees regularly using email. A brief tip – something that is easy for them to change or implement – can be sent out periodically.

- *Use health fairs to offer ergo instruction*

If your company sponsors a health fair, you can use this time to reach out to employees and give them information on proper body mechanics, stretching and how to stay safe in regards to ergonomics and repetitive motion. Hand out tip cards or stretching information, or use your vendors and consultants to provide you with information on particular tools or equipment.

Remember that in lean economic times, it takes a little planning and preparation, but very affordable training options are out there! Educating employees about ergonomics has been shown as the most effective way to minimize repetitive motion injuries in the workplace.

Cost-Effective Ergonomics Solutions

By JAULLA SAATCHI

Kensington Comfort Type Keyboard USB K64338



The Kensington Comfort Type Keyboard offers an ergonomic keyboard solution for users who shy from a split design and prefer the standard 104-key layout. Differing only in regard to slightly angled keys, the design of the Comfort Type Keyboard encourages users to assume a relaxed, natural wrist positioning, reducing awkward wrist positions for most users. The Comfort Type Keyboard also offers a light key feel, requiring much less force to type and reducing some users' tendency to type forcefully. In addition to preserving the standard layout, the keys of the Comfort Type Keyboard are located in the same location as in standard keyboards, presenting users with no learning curve. With PC and MAC compatibility and priced at \$19.99, the Kensington Comfort Type Keyboard packs outstanding comfort benefits into a very small price.

Cost-Effective Ergonomics Solutions (cont.)

Logitech Marble Mouse




The Logitech Marble Mouse allows users to operate the mousing device with a trackball mechanism to move the cursor. Rather than moving the entire device, users utilize the fingers to move the “marble,” reducing lateral wrist motions, shoulder movement and gripping, as well as promoting neutral hand and wrist postures. With its symmetrical design, the Marble Mouse can be used with either hand. Since this device takes up little space to operate, it is perfect for applications where the user has limited room for mousing activities; if a user has a narrow keyboard platform, it would be more cost-effective to utilize the Marble Mouse on the existing keyboard platform than to purchase an additional wider platform. Another benefit that this product offers is its high profile design. The shape of the Marble Mouse encourages users to keep their wrists up and off of the work surface while providing hand support. Overall, with a price point of less than \$20, whether used for office, home or laptop applications, the Logitech Marble Mouse is a cost-effective solution to often problematic mousing posture.

Fellowes Desktop Copy Holder 21106



For computer users who reference hard-copy documents while typing and mousing, the Fellowes Desktop Copy Holder is an office essential. Raising items into users’ eye levels to minimize fine neck movements, the easel-style stand is adjustable for height and angle and alternates between vertical and horizontal positioning. This document holder offers an adjustable document clip that holds up to 125 sheets of letter, legal or wide-sized forms in either horizontal or vertical orientation. In addition, the Desktop Copy Holder offers a removable line guide that moves up and down and can be taken off while not in use. Priced at \$8.99, the Fellowes Desktop Copy Holder is a very inexpensive way to save your neck.

And a Nod to Our Own Madison Fierro

Since 2007 Pelletier & Associates has had the opportunity to have an up and coming journalist on our staff. Madison has been working with us in an administrative capacity while attending the University of California, Irvine. Recently, Madison joined the Orange County Register as a student intern and has had the opportunity to contribute to the paper, writing articles with her own byline! This is a great accomplishment for someone just starting out. You can check out Madison’s work at www.ocregister.com. 

In today’s business environment, successful companies know that creating a productive work force includes managing potential threats to health, safety and productivity.

At Pelletier & Associates, Inc., it is our mission to offer education, guidance, support and solutions to individuals and organizations by providing a complete line of disability management services.

We specialize in:

- Comprehensive Ergonomics Services
- Technology Products and Services
- Return to Work Program Development
- Worker’s Compensation Issues

To learn more about these services and/or schedule a free, no-obligation, initial consultation at your facility, please call us at (949) 206-9923 and be sure to visit our website at www.pelletierinc.com