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TOOLBOX TALK

Topic: Repetitive Strain Injuries (RSIs)

Date discussed with crews: _____

Toolbox talk delivered by (name): _____

Background

February 28th is Repetitive Strain Injury Awareness Day.

What are Repetitive Strain Injuries (RSIs)

Also known as musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs), RSIs are an umbrella term used to describe a family of painful disorders affecting tendons, muscles, nerves and joints in the neck, upper and lower back, chest, shoulders, arms and hands.

How do RSIs occur?

Gripping, holding, bending, twisting, clenching, typing, lifting, pushing, pulling, and reaching can be hazardous in the workplace when repeated at high frequency.

What are some examples of RSIs?

- Back injuries: Workers perform constant twisting, bending, and stretching motions, usually to pick up or set down heavy objects. The constant pressure and awkward positions required of the spine can result in injury.
- Joint injuries: Tendinitis, an inflammation in the tendons, is a common injury in construction workers due to constant pressure on the tendons in their knees, elbows and shoulders and without proper rest to recover.
- Fingers injuries: Vibrations from drills, jackhammers, and nail guns may cause “trigger-finger” injuries such as Raynaud’s Syndrome, tendonitis, circulation problems (white finger) or nerve damage.
- Wrist injuries: Repeated grabbing and twisting to install fixtures or perform repairs can cause inflammation of the tendons in the wrist, leading to carpal tunnel syndrome.
- Arm injuries: Workers may need to be pressing tools against parts of the body to apply the necessary pressure to get the job done, forcing their bodies and arms into awkward positions while doing so. The force of the strain on the forearms can result in tennis elbow, while upper body strain can result in pinched nerve.
- Neck and shoulder injuries: Reaching or holding objects over the head for long periods of time can strain the neck and upper back, causing of rotator cuff injuries.

How can we prevent RSIs?

LIFTING:

- Always use machinery where possible to assist with a lift. If machinery is not possible, as a colleague to help you with the lift or reduce the load.
- When lifting, stand close to the load, balance your feet, bend at the knees, get a good grip and lift smoothly. Never twist and bend while lifting.

VIBRATION & FORCE

- Use anti–vibration power tools and anti–vibration gloves to reduce damage to the nerves.
- Take rest periods to avoid continuous exposure to vibration and repetitive or forceful movements.
- Make sure tools are in good working order. Broken power tools cause excessive vibration. Blunt hand tools increase the effort needed to use them.
- Replace hand tools with power tools whenever possible. Manual tools require more exertion of frequent and repetitive force.

PULLING, PUSHING, & BENDING

- Organize the work area in a way that minimises the need to reach, bend and overextend.
- Avoid extreme or awkward joint or body positions. Reduce sudden or excessive movement.

GRIPPING & CLENCHING

- Always use tools that are easy and comfortable to hold.
- Always bend the tool, never the wrist.
- Reduce excessive gripping force or pressure.

Videos

- 2-minute toolbox talk: Proper Lifting Technique: https://youtu.be/Dcf9bT9DK94
- Safety Toolbox Talks: Material handling and safety lifting (construction setting) https://youtu.be/9RQ_S4ik_jg