Remote Work Ergonomics Considerations

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues, many businesses are finding that they are evaluating extended remote work arrangements for a significant number of staff. Remote work arrangements for many positions can be convenient, but also potentially harmful if working conditions do not closely match those of a traditional workspace. Many employees have found that they are working from couches and peering into small laptop screens sitting on coffee tables. Conditions like these can lead to ergonomic injuries if they are prolonged.

Ergonomic injuries are often chronic in nature and therefore hard to mitigate once they occur. Many ergonomic injuries start off as small discomforts that, over time, evolve into long lasting joint pain and stiffness, nerve and blood vessel damage, vision changes, and in some cases maladies such as recurrent headaches. These injuries tend to create quality of life issues and may require prolonged treatment and accommodation.

As employees transition to long-term or even permanent remote work practices, care should be taken to provide the resources necessary to accommodate safe work practices in the remote environment. The focus of any effort to improve remote work conditions should be to arrange workspaces in a manner that closely matches the modern office workstation. The basic resources necessary for creating ergonomically correct remote work areas include:

- Correct chairs and computer stands
- Appropriately sized and positioned monitors
- Adaptable periphery accessories
- Appropriate hardware and software for job tasks
- Sound and lighting considerations
- Coordinated stretch and movement reminders
- Removing cords, toys, and similar trip and fall hazards from the remote workspace

Remote work is a two-way street in most cases; employers and employees must work together

to create and maintain safe remote work conditions. Many times, the most basic means of facilitating ergonomic safety is to survey employees about their needs and assist in providing the appropriate supplies and support. A simple method for facilitating ergonomic conditions is the workspace checklist. These checklists can be developed to assist in matching employee safety needs with remote working needs and form a basis for allocating resources appropriately.

For additional information and best practices please contact your Risk Control representative or contact riskcontrol@hendersonbrothers.com.