Ergonomics and the Mature Worker

Safety Talk

What's at Stake?

Older workers are dying on the job at a higher rate than workers overall, even though the overall rate of workplace fatalities has been decreasing.

What's the Danger?

While many people are quite capable of working well into their 60s or longer, they are at greater risk for injury and job-related illnesses because of reduced strength, balance, hearing, vision, and slower reaction time.

How to Protect Yourself

Following these seven ergonomic based tips can help mature workers stay safe and be more comfortable on the job.

1. Arrange your workstation to minimize the distance you need to reach for equipment or materials.
    - The items you need to use most frequently should be centrally located.
    - Ensure your chair is at the correct height and properly adjusted to your workstation's height.
2. Shed some light on the situation.
    - Low lighting can lead to trips, slips and falls.
    - A middle-aged worker needs up to six times as much light to see, compared to someone in his or her 20's.
    - Bump up the type size at your computer to make reading documents easier. And ensure there is adequate lighting.

3. Reduce lifting demands on your body.
    - Use lifting devices such as carts whenever possible.
    - Lift with your legs instead of your back.
    - If you are repeatedly reaching into boxes, try to place them on benches or tables to reduce the need for bending.
4. Listen up.
    - If you have difficulty hearing what others are saying, have your hearing checked.
    - It’s a good idea to let your supervisor know if you have hearing loss or wear a hearing aid. This helps keep everyone safe and can also affect the type of hearing protection you wear.
5. Make a move.
    - If your job involves long periods of sitting, get up and stand and stretch or take a short walk at least hourly.
    - You’ll be less stiff and you’ll improve your body’s blood flow.
6. Watch out!
    - Take extra care when walking on slippery surfaces, particularly elevated slippery surfaces.
7. Work it out.
    - Try to get regular exercise to keep your body limber and heart strong.
    - If you haven’t been exercising much and want to start, check with your doctor first to ensure you don’t overdo it

Final Word

Mature workers bring invaluable knowledge and experience to their jobs. Following a few ergonomic work practices can keep these workers safe and productive so they can continue to share that knowledge and experience