Spot the OSHA Violation: Is What You'd Call an Ergonomically Sound Work Practice?

What's wrong with this picture?



A direct hammer blow to the head like the one that Larry is about to deliver Curly is likely to result in a traumatic, i.e., immediate injury.

But what you might not realize is that much softer blows or sustained contact over a long period of time can also cause gradual injury.

The Moral: Contact with hard things can cause serious injury, whether traumatic or gradual. The term for this hazard is "contact stress" and if your job involves banging or leaning up against hard objects, edges or surfaces, you need to be aware of it.

CONTACT STRESS HAZARDS

WHAT'S AT STAKE

- Your work puts you at risk of musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs, for short)
- Although they won't kill you, MSDs are very painful and potentially disabling

- Contact stress is a common cause of MSDs.
- Repeated or sustained contact can affect your nerves and bloodflow, especially where the part of the body you make contact with doesn’t have a lot of protective tissue like knees, elbows and the palms of your hands
- If you understand the danger, you can protect yourself against it

8 Things You Can Do to Manage Contact Stress Hazards

1. Use tools that reduce contact stress like spring-assisted tools

2. Instead of using the palm of your hand, elbows or other parts of your body, hit objects with a rubber mallet, bean bag or other padded tool

3. Instead of using the palm of your hand, elbows or other parts of your body, press or hold objects in place using levers or hydraulic or pneumatic tools

4. If you can’t avoid making contact with the palm of your hand, minimize the impact by using viscoelastic padded palm pads and/or making sure the hard or sharp objects you hit are covered or padded

5. Protect your knees by using tools that don’t require knee kicks like long handled mallets

6. Protect your knees and elbows by wearing knee pads, elbow pads, or padded clothing

7. When in doubt, ask your supervisor for help

8. Follow your company’s safety rules and safe work procedures

ANTI-VIBRATION gloves that minimize the effects of vibration that can fatigue your muscles and make you more vulnerable to an MSD