

The Think Tank **ERRP**

UPDATES/**TOOLS**/INFORMATION

"The Think Tank"

This is the debut issue of a newsletter created by the Portland P&DC Ergonomic work group called "The Think Tank". The purpose of this newsletter is to inform and communicate with fellow postal workers about proposed and completed ergonomic projects and operational changes that benefit the employees and the Postal Service at the Portland plant.

Our goal is the reduction of musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) through ergonomic risk identification and resolution. The Think Tank team combines the talents of management, labor unions and individual craft employees to ensure that everyone has a safe and productive workplace.

In upcoming issues of the newsletters we will attempt to highlight team members so you may get to know who your ergonomic representatives are and to promote comments and feedback regarding pending and finished projects. Your questions, ideas and observations are welcome and we encourage you to talk to a team member about issues you feel relevant to the Ergonomics Risk Reduction Process (ERRP)



Portland ERRP Team
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The Dogs Are Barking: The Moon Is Full

By Greg Stark and Steven Phillipson



Unfortunately most of us are familiar with aches and pains in our legs and feet since postal employees often spend many hours standing on hard floors.

Fortunately there are some things that you can do to reduce or eliminate the discomfort.

**Here are some tips to help reduce foot pain and fatigue:
Consider insoles.**

Effective pain relief and added comfort can be found using insoles purchased at your local pharmacy or sport shop. However, custom insoles often ensure a better fit.

A study conducted at a USPS BMC showed that wearing insoles reduced the perceived amount of pain suffered in the feet, knees and/or back by 67%.

There are many brands of insoles available. Although we don't endorse any specific company, three brands that have proven popular among employees at the Portland Plant are: MegaComfort, Superfeet and Foot Shox. These are all available on the Web.

Wear proper shoes.

Regardless of the type of footwear you have, make sure it fits your feet properly. When purchasing new shoes make sure you get fitted with your insoles (if you wear them) and appropriate socks, and do so at the end of the day when your feet are the largest.

Give your feet a rest. Even before you begin to notice the signs of fatigue or pain, give your feet a break when possible.



Why Does My Lower Back Hurt?

By Steven M. Phillipson

There have been many times in my postal career when I had lower back pain. In fact it got so bad at one point that I thought that I had injured myself so I went to a doctor for help. After finding nothing wrong the physician referred me to a physical therapist who informed me that my lower back pain was caused by my leg muscles contracting and "loading up" or pulling down on my lower back muscles. Not long after I started a routine of two leg stretches and one lower back stretch and my pain went away, and I am still pain free today. Stretching is important because it lowers the potential for injury and maintains flexibility for all of the other activities in your life.

One of the 10 principles of ergonomics points out the need to exercise and stretch. To help prevent injury you need to stretch each joint to the full range of motion periodically throughout the day. Stretching increases blood flow and oxygen to muscles and promotes flexibility. For best results, stretching should be done prior to physical activity. Even a short routine of a few stretches can make a big difference. Here are a few simple stretches you can do periodically while at work.

Hamstring Stretch: Most runners do this stretch by placing their foot on a waist high stationary object and slowly leaning forward reaching down the shin until you feel the hamstring stretch.

Calf Stretch: This stretch is one you see runners perform just before competing. They lean against a wall or stationary object with both palms against a wall. The leg you want to stretch is back several feet with the heel firmly planted on the floor. The other

leg is flexed about half way between your back leg and the wall. Lean forward keeping your back straight until you feel the calf stretching, it is important to keep your back foot pointed towards the wall at all times.



Lower Back Stretch: This one was taught to me by an ergonomist during ergonomics training. It involves making a fist with both hands then placing your fists at the small of your back on both sides of your spine and at the top of the hips. Lean back while pressing in with your fists until you feel the lower back muscles stretch.

Remember as with all stretching routines be sure not to bounce and try to remain in a static position for best results.



It should never hurt when stretching, stay within your comfort zone.