

**Ontario Health and Safety System Staff  
MSD Prevention Guideline for Ontario  
Questions and Answers**

**MSD Prevention Guideline and Resource Manual for Ontario**

**Q. What is Ontario's MSD Prevention Series?**

- A. The Ontario MSD Prevention Series consists of three documents:
1. The **MSD Prevention Guideline for Ontario** - this document provides a framework for preventing MSDs in the workplace and information on understanding what MSDs are and the hazards associated with them.
  2. The **Resource Manual for the MSD Prevention Guideline for Ontario** - this document compliments the guideline and provides more in-depth detail.
  3. The **MSD Prevention Toolbox** – this document is still in draft form and under review. It will contain information sheets, sample surveys, hazard identification tools and control strategies.

**Q. What is the purpose of the MSD Prevention Guideline and Resource Manual?**

- A. The guideline and resource manual are intended to inform workplace parties and the health and safety system partners about what MSDs are and how they can be recognized, assessed and controlled to minimize their impact on workers.

**Q. How can I get a copy of the MSD Prevention Guideline and Resource Manual?**

- A. The MSD Prevention Guideline and Resource Manual will be available to download on the WSIB and each of the HSA websites. You may also be able to order print copies from the individual HSAs.

**Q. When will the toolbox be available?**

- A. The toolbox has undergone a stakeholder review and input from a panel of international experts. The tools will be revised accordingly and it will be released later in 2007. In the meantime, the first and second drafts are available on the Pulp and Paper Health and Safety Association's website [www.pphsa.on.ca](http://www.pphsa.on.ca) under "OHSCO MSD Prevention Strategy".

**Q. Who developed the MSD Prevention Guideline for Ontario?**

A. The MSD guideline, resource manual and toolbox were developed by the Occupational Health and Safety Council of Ontario (OHSCO) and the Centre for Research Excellence in Musculoskeletal Disorders (CRE-MSD). OHSCO is comprised of representatives from each of Ontario's health and safety system partners which include: the Ministry of Labour, the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB), the Institute for Work & Health and the Health and Safety Associations.

**Q. Why did OHSCO develop these documents? Why is MSD prevention so important?**

A. MSDs account for over 40 percent of all workplace injuries that are reported to the WSIB. The impact of these injuries on Ontario is staggering both from a financial and a societal perspective. In the past, these disorders have not received the same attention as other workplace hazards often due to the fact that employers and workers have difficulty recognizing these hazards and the affect they have on workers tends to be progressive rather than sudden.

**Q. I'm not an ergonomist. What do the MSD Prevention Guideline, Resource Manual and Toolbox mean to me?**

A. You do not need to be an ergonomist to understand the MSD Prevention Guideline, Resource Manual and Toolbox. In fact, the intended audience for the guideline is workers, employers, Joint Health and Safety Committee (JHSC) members, Health and Safety Representatives, unions, associations, etc. The content of the guideline will inform readers about the primary risk factors associated with MSDs and suitable ways of controlling these risks. It introduces a framework for addressing MSD risks similar to an approach that would be used for other workplace risks.

**Q. As a front line staff person, what am I supposed to do with this?**

A. You should download a copy of each of the documents and become familiar with the content. OHSCO will be delivering training sessions for system staff on the content of these documents. During your workplace interactions, you should inform the workplace parties about the existence of these documents.

**Q. As a front line staff person, where can I get more training on the issue of MSD prevention?**

A. The OHSCO MSD Prevention working group is preparing training material for front-line system staff on the details of the guideline as well as a generic training program that system partners could present to their

clients. Notification will be sent to all interested parties upon confirmation of locations and dates.

**Q. How are workplaces supposed to get help if they need it?**

A. Workplaces will be encouraged to contact the provincial Health and Safety Associations for information on MSD issues specific to their sector.

**Q. What MSD sector-specific material is available?**

A. There is an abundance of MSD prevention material available from the health and safety system partners. A project is currently underway to catalogue all of the existing system resources that address MSDs to enable front-line staff from the health and safety system to identify the availability of specific material they may be searching for.

**Q. Will workplaces be expected to implement every step outlined in the Resource Manual for the MSD Prevention Guideline for Ontario and use all of the tools in the MSD Prevention Toolbox?**

A. The guideline and resource manual present a framework for injury prevention that is applicable to any health and safety hazard. Workplaces should currently have a system/approach to recognize and control any workplace hazard.

The guideline and resource manual can be used as seed documents for workplaces that do not have an effective approach to dealing with MSD issues. They do not have any authority associated with them. They are intended to be a resource.

The toolbox samples are provided as a means of assisting workplaces to put their plans for recognizing and controlling MSD hazards into action.

**Q. What will the implementation of this guideline cost employers? Can employers afford this?**

A. It is estimated that from 1996 to 2004, Ontario employers paid more than \$12 billion in direct and indirect costs related to MSDs.

A proactive approach with prevention in mind will help to reduce worker pain and suffering and the associated costs.

## **Ergonomics**

### **Q. What are musculoskeletal disorders?**

A. Musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) is an umbrella term for a number of injuries and disorders of the muscles, tendons, nerves, etc.

A worker's exposure to various risk factors in the workplace may result in the development of MSDs or aggravate a pre-existing condition. (OHSCO definition)

### **Q. Why was the term musculoskeletal disorders chosen?**

A. The term musculoskeletal disorders is commonly used in many parts of the world (USA, Europe). This term has been chosen because it is not synonymous with a particular injury/disorder or hazard and it sends a message that these problems are not necessarily an injury. They often develop over time and are hence seen as a disorder rather than due to a traumatic event.

### **Q. Can you give us an example of a musculoskeletal disorder?**

A. Common MSDs that can develop in the workplace include back pain, muscle strain, tendonitis, carpal tunnel syndrome and tennis elbow.

### **Q. What is ergonomics?**

A. Ergonomics is the science of fitting the work to the worker. The goal is to optimize a worker's performance, health and well-being. It is considered a key to injury prevention.

### **Q. What are the benefits of having an MSD prevention program in place?**

A. Benefits include:

- Improved worker satisfaction, morale and well-being
- Reduced WSIB lost-time injury claims and the associated direct and indirect costs
- Improved ability to retain experienced, knowledgeable and skilled workers
- Reduced administrative costs related to claims management and investigation
- Increased quality, productivity and profits.

**Q. How many workers are affected by work-related MSDs in Ontario?**

A. According to the WSIB, in 2004 there were 39,436 musculoskeletal disorders resulting in lost-time at work. In 2005, there were 39,780 musculoskeletal disorders resulting in lost-time at work.

MSD claims make up over 40 per cent of all lost-time injuries in Ontario workplaces.

### **Specific to the Ministry of Labour**

**Q. Are there regulations under the Occupational Health and Safety Act of Ontario (OHSA) that address ergonomics?**

A. The OHSA requires employers to provide information, instruction and supervision to workers and to take every precaution reasonable to ensure the health and safety of workers. Musculoskeletal disorder (MSD) hazards that are present in the workplace must be recognized and precautions put in place to fulfill requirements under the OHSA. There are also specific sections in the sector-based regulations under the OHSA used to enforce proper ergonomic practices.

**Q. Will the MSD Prevention Guideline for Ontario be enforced by the Ministry of Labour?**

A. The MSD Prevention Guideline for Ontario was created in conjunction with OHSCO partners as a reference document to assist employers and workers. It is not a regulatory document.

**Q. Will Ministry of Labour inspectors refer to the guideline when doing inspections?**

A. The Ministry of Labour inspectors will be knowledgeable of this document and, where workplaces have no effective processes in place to address MSDs, they may refer the workplace parties to the guideline and resource manual. Inspectors will use them as a guideline for their own knowledge when making decisions on MSD hazards and appropriate controls in the workplace.

**Q. How is the Ministry addressing ergonomics in Ontario workplaces?**

A. The Ministry has been addressing ergonomics through a multi-faceted approach:

- The Minister's Ergonomics Advisory Panel forwarded a number of recommendations to improve ergonomics safety, which the Ministry has been implementing. These include: training of Ministry inspectors on ergonomics, utilizing a risk-based approach when inspecting workplaces, developing a tracking system for ergonomic activity, drafting MSD operational policy and procedures and incorporating an MSD focus in High-Risk initiative.
- On January 26, 2006, the Minister launched the Pains & Strains Campaign. Its goal is to raise awareness of MSDs and motivate workplaces to take action to recognize, assess and control MSD hazards.
- Initiatives in support of the Pains & Strains Campaign include: the dissemination of pains and strains information on the MOL website and an employer fact sheet, incorporating an MSD focus during inspections of High-Risk workplaces and providing the High-Risk inspectors with training to identify MSD hazards in the workplace during their workplace inspections. On April 1, 2007, the inspectors' MSD activity will expand into all workplaces.
- The Ministry of Labour has been an active member of OHSCO's MSD prevention working sub-committee. The Ministry has provided technical expertise and resources in the development of the guideline, resource manual, toolbox (still under development) and the ongoing collection of sector-specific material.