Ergonomic Policy

I. Purpose:
The purpose of this policy is to reduce the number and severity of work-related musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) by identification and resolution of ergonomic hazards through training, ergonomic assessments and medical management.

II. Scope:
This policy applies to all Western Michigan University employees, full time, part time, and students involved in manual material handling, repetitive motion, and other jobs where there are work related musculoskeletal disorder hazards.

III. Definitions:
A. Musculoskeletal Disorder (MSD) is a disorder of the muscles, nerves, tendons, ligaments, joints, cartilage, blood vessels, or spinal discs. For purposes of this policy, this definition only includes MSDs in the following areas of the body that have been associated with exposure to risk factors: neck, shoulder, elbow, forearm, wrist, hand, abdomen (hernia only), back, knee, ankle, and foot. MSDs may include muscle strains and tears, ligament sprains, joint and tendon inflammation, pinched nerves, and spinal disc degeneration. MSDs include such medical conditions as: low back pain, tension neck syndrome, carpal tunnel syndrome, rotator cuff syndrome, DeQuervain’s syndrome, trigger finger, tarsal tunnel syndrome, sciatica, epicondylitis, tendinitis, Raynaud's phenomenon, hand-arm vibration syndrome (HAVS), carpet layer's knee, and herniated spinal disc. Injuries arising from slips, trips, falls, motor vehicle accidents, or similar accidents are not considered MSDs for the purposes of this policy.

B. MSD hazard means the presence of risk factors in the job that occur at a magnitude, duration, or frequency that is reasonably likely to cause MSDs that result in work restrictions or medical treatment beyond first aid.

C. MSD incident means an MSD that is work-related, and requires medical treatment beyond first aid, or MSD signs or MSD symptoms that last for 7 or more consecutive days after the employee reports them.

D. MSD signs are objective physical findings that an employee may be developing an MSD. For example: decreased range of motion, deformity, decreased grip strength; and loss of muscle function.

E. MSD symptoms are physical indications that an employee may be developing an MSD. Examples are: pain, numbness, tingling, burning, cramping and stiffness (does not include discomfort).

F. Risk factor means, for the purpose of this policy, force, awkward posture, repetition, vibration, and contact stress.

IV. Procedures/Requirements:
A. Supervisor:
1. If employee has reported an MSD incident, as determined by Sindecuse Health Care Professional, supervisor may contact EHS for an ergonomic assessment.

B. Employee:
1. Promptly report signs and symptoms of potential MSD to supervisor.
2. Participate in training and ergonomic analysis.
3. Participate in job-specific engineering controls, work practices, personal protective equipment (PPE) and medical management.
4. Provide feedback of ergonomic engineering controls, work practices and personal protective equipment.

E. Environmental Health and Safety:
1. Trainer and resources for managers, supervisors and employees.
2. Record keeper of training classes and ergonomic assessments.

C. Sindecuse Health Care Provider:
1. Determine whether reported MSD or MSD signs and symptoms qualify as an MSD incident. Communicate in writing in departmental management.
2. An MSD report is classified as an MSD incident if:
   a. The MSD is work-related and requires days away from work, restricted work, or medical treatment beyond first aid is required; or
   b. The MSD signs or symptoms are work related.
3. Provide management with written opinion containing:
   a. Assessment of employee's medical condition as related to the physical work activities, risk factors, and MSD hazards in the employee's job.
   b. Any recommended work restrictions, including, if necessary, time off work to recover, and any follow-up needed.
   c. A statement that the employee has been informed of the results of the evaluation, the process to be followed to effect recovery and any medical conditions associated with exposure to physical work activities, risk factors and MSD hazards in the employee's job.
   d. A statement that the employee has been informed of work-related or other activities that could impede recovery from the injury.