

Pinnacol Pointers for Safety Group Programs

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Engage Employees for a Successful Ergonomics Program

Work anywhere long enough and you will discover that back pain is among the most common complaints ... and injury claims. Ergonomics can help your organization reduce these claims and improve employees' health, and greater employee engagement can bring better ergonomics to the workplace.

Why engage employees?

First, let's look at why it makes sense to engage workers in ergonomic improvements:

- By engaging workers, you involve the experts. They're the ones who sit in office chairs every day; they're the ones who literally do the heavy lifting.
- Engaged employees are more informed employees. If more informed, your workers likely will embrace ergonomics principles and practices.
- With more employees involved in the process, more and diverse ideas for improvements and tweaks will bubble to the top.
- When employees have a say in identifying, evaluating and purchasing tools, equipment and chairs, they are more inclined to use these items and reduce discomfort.
- Perhaps most important, by engaging your entire workforce and not just your safety manager or facilities team, you'll grow your organization's culture of health and safety.

How to engage employees

- **Give them a seat at the table from the start.** For example, workers can develop a survey that helps shape your organization's ergonomics program. Good open-ended survey questions include, "What works well?" "What doesn't work well?" and "What ideas do you have for reducing employees' physical discomfort at work?"
- **Err on the side of overcommunicating.** A kickoff announcement and training session are insufficient. Ongoing communications through multiple channels works best. For example, schedule a succession of newsletter stories, hold monthly brown-bag lunch presentations for teams, conduct biweekly stand-up meetings that use a whiteboard to track team progress, and incentivize participation and compliance.
- **Be responsive.** Your ergonomics program team, as well as all managers with direct reports, must respond quickly to ideas and successes that employees bring forward.

Seemingly disinterested leadership can quash an ergonomics program — as it can any corporate initiative.

- **Train workers.** The best training goes beyond concepts to include case studies and worker testimonials.
- **Celebrate successes.** Share testimonials of team members who've used equipment, practices and principles to reduce discomfort or pain.

Pinnacol Resources

Contact Pinnacol's Safety On Call at safetyoncall@pinnacol.com or 303.361.4700 or 888.501.4752 for help with your organization's ergonomics program and resources. For training support, visit the [Knowledge Center](#) at Pinnacol's website to view our interactive office ergonomics video. A host of additional downloads — FAQs; guidelines for choosing an ergonomic chair and workstation setup; a stretching and warm-up exercise handout; and equipment procurement and use checklists — can help prevent musculoskeletal strains and injuries to your office workers. You can order a DVD copy of the interactive video program from Pinnacol's [Order Materials](#) webpage. For resources on general ergonomics and lifting, visit the [Safe Lifting and Ergonomics](#) webpage.

To help meet your organization's ergonomic needs, Pinnacol partners with Office Relief, a supplier with discounted pricing for Pinnacol customers on task chairs and ergonomic accessories. Contact Office Relief's Jeff Bellamy at 720.232.5637 or jbellamy@officerelief.com, and identify yourself as a Pinnacol customer to receive our preferred pricing.

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