



Hanover County Safety & Risk Management Communication

Happy Safety & Risk Friday (#SafetyFriday)! This week's short subject centers on Stretching & Flexing!

Safety & Risk Tip of the Week:

Did you know that soft tissue damage to a worker's body is the number one cause for worker compensation claims annually? It is easy for us to believe that soft tissue injuries only happen to co-workers that are required to lift heavy equipment, tools or materials routinely on a daily basis, but statistics will tell us that while these injuries are all too common with these types of tasks, they are just as prevalent in low risk work environments!

One method for avoiding soft tissue injuries in the workplace is through use of stretch & flex techniques. Stretching improves muscle elasticity and leads to increased muscle control, flexibility and range of motion. Many stretch before and after a workout, upon waking in the morning or even after a road trip, but what about workplace stretching?

Ergonomically sound tools and habits are key to an efficient working environment. Stretching is beneficial to the overall health of the body and plays a role in reducing musculoskeletal disorders among employees. MSD's account for more than 600,000 injuries and illnesses and 34% of all workdays lost.

Stretching enhances ergonomic improvement plans, team member training and prevention processes. When muscles are stretched blood supply increases, soft tissue structures realign and muscle coordination strengthens. All of these functions ultimately reduce the likelihood of sustaining a soft tissue injury in the work environment. When considering adding stretching & flexing to your daily work routine, consider the following basic guidelines:

- It is recommended to build in frequent, short breaks to stretch while at the office whenever possible.
- Consider taking the time to practice relaxation while on stretch breaks as well.
- Take a step back between tasks to stretch out tense muscles, relax and take a few deep breaths.
- Deep breaths supplement oxygen to the blood, which aids in relaxing muscles and maintaining mental alertness.

Adopting a regimen of stretching & flexing will not only improve your overall health, but will go a long way to protecting against soft tissue injuries as well!

Safety & Risk Resource Spotlight:

- **Heat Illness Prevention:** With the weather in central Virginia changing from the cold of winter to the heat of summer, as the mercury rises, so does the risk of heat related illness. If you work (or play!) in the heat, either indoors or out, OSHA & NIOSH offer a Heat Illness Prevention App that can be used for both work and play. The application is a quick use tool that monitors heat levels and provides guidance on how to prepare, protect against or respond to heat related illness in a variety of conditions. To download, simply access the Apple App Store or Google Play and search for the OSHA/NIOSH Heat Illness Prevention app.
- **Stretch & Flex Resources:** To go along with this week's Safety & Risk Tip of the week, you can find attached a link to a [stretch & flex exercise chart](#) that can be integrated for use into any work task!

Safety & Risk News & Updates:

- No regulatory or Safety & Risk Management updates for the week of May 2.

Safety & Risk Observances:

- May 1-7 is Hurricane Preparedness Week! With the start of Hurricane season approaching, now is the time to make sure you and your family are prepared. [NOAA](#) & the [Virginia Department of Emergency Management](#) offer a number of resources for home and work to plan & get prepared! You can access this information by clicking on the links provided.

Safety & Risk Quote of the Week:

