

## Understanding Ergonomics at Work (Part 4 of 5)

### How do I identify ergonomic problems?

There are many ways in which ergonomic problems can be identified. These can range from general observations and checklists to quantitative risk assessment tools.

Ideally, several approaches should be used:

- Talking to employees and seeking their views. Employees have important knowledge of the work they do, any problems they have, and their impact on health, safety, and performance.
- Assessing the work system by asking questions such as:
  - is the person in a comfortable position?
  - does the person experience discomfort, including aches, pain, fatigue, or stress?
  - is the equipment appropriate, easy to use and well maintained?
  - is the person satisfied with their working arrangements?
  - are there frequent errors?
  - are there signs of poor or inadequate equipment design, such as plasters on workers' fingers or 'home-made' protective pads made of tissue or foam?
- Examining the circumstances surrounding frequent errors and incidents where mistakes have occurred and people have been injured. Use accident reports to identify details of incidents and their possible causes.
- Recording and looking at sickness absence and staff turnover levels. High numbers may result from the problems listed earlier and/or dissatisfaction at work.