



PREVENTING TOMORROW'S INJURIES TODAY

## ERGONOMICS GUIDELINES APPROVED FOR NURSING HOMES

The Workers' Compensation Committee at the National Conference of Insurance Legislators unanimously approved a resolution supporting ergonomics guidelines for nursing homes and encouraging such facilities to use alternative mechanical lifting methods. OSHA suggests that hospitals and similar work environments should find these guidelines useful.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, healthcare workers lead the nation in work-related back injuries. 12 out of 100 nurses in hospitals, and 17.3 out of 100 nurses working in nursing homes report work-related injuries, resulting in spiraling costs.

Preventing these kinds of injuries with ergonomics training is critical at a time when the nation's obesity epidemic means more than half of the U.S. population is overweight. Lifting 200- to 300-pound patients can be a daily occurrence for healthcare workers.

### ADVENTIST HOSPITAL USED ERGONOMICS TO LOWER WORKER'S COMP COSTS

After watching significant chunks of revenue go to worker compensation costs, reserves for injury cases and payments for medical care on existing claims, CFO of the Frank R. Howard Memorial, an Adventist Hospital in Willits, California, Carlton Jacobson started to look for ways to reduce these costs.

Although FRH Memorial had an active safety committee with a flexible budget for providing abatements and removing safety hazards, their main problem was controlling how healthcare workers physically interacted with their workplace environment on a day-to-day basis. Performing a heavy patient lift single-handed could eas-

ily happen if no help was immediately available. Jacobson introduced a custom designed program delivered by Future Industrial Technologies (FIT) where skilled injury prevention specialists provide workplace safety training.



FIT provided an extensive walk-through to identify ergonomic risk factors and work tasks that presented a high injury potential. Patient lifting was targeted as a high-risk area, and the hospital was advised to purchase mechanical lifts to assist the staff with heavy patient transfers.

### RESULTS

Implementation of this safety program reduced the incidence of back injuries and loss rates from \$377,000 to \$12,800 in just three years.

The workplace safety program trained the nurses in the proper use of the lifts and each worker attended "back safe" training to learn, practice and re-enforce safe lifting techniques.

"Many hospitals run on a slim bottom line and the decision to put money out for training and equipment is a big one," said Jacobson. "Our total equipment costs were around \$50,000, well under the cost of one injured worker in California. This ergonomics training program saved us injuries and worker compensation costs."

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#### About Future Industrial Technologies

FIT offers workplace safety and ergonomics training programs. BACKSAFE® teaches employees how to perform their specific job tasks in a manner that is biomechanically correct. SITTINGSAFE® teaches office employees how to adapt their existing workstations so they are ergonomically correct. These injury prevention programs make your workplace safer and are proven to reduce injuries and worker compensation insurance costs.

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