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## Carpal Tunnel Syndrome Reaching Epidemic Proportions

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### **CASE STUDY: LA County Carpal Tunnel Syndrome Reaching Epidemic Proportions**

Ergonomics Training A Vital Workplace Safety Action For Data Entry Personnel

#### **SITUATION:**

Frank Dominguez, a supervisor for the Los Angeles County Assessor's Office Special Investigators Unit, was tasked with bringing awareness of ergonomics training to the County and the Union (Local 660) that services Los Angeles county. One of the objectives was to lower the incidences of RSI and carpal tunnel syndrome in data entry office workers.

As our reliance on computers increases, Repetitive Strain Injuries (RSI) such as Carpel Tunnel Syndrome (CTS) are hitting epidemic proportions. More than 28 million Americans use computers each day and, according to officials at the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, (OSHA) many risk coming down with carpal tunnel syndrome, the painful, debilitating condition that is the number one disability reported by insurance companies today.

Repetitive musculoskeletal injuries like CTS have become the nation's leading workplace health cost. RSI represents 62 percent of all North American WC claims and results in nearly \$15-20 billion in lost work time and Workers Compensation claims each year, reports OSHA.

For a while LA County they used ergonomics training offered by local universities, but found that the employees were not receptive to these programs. They tried using people in the department to help others learn better workplace safety systems, but that had little or no success.

#### **SOLUTION:**

Dominguez learned about Future Industrial Technologies (F.I.T.) and their ergonomics training programs delivered by healthcare professionals who are trained as injury prevention specialists.

The BACKSAFE® and SITTINGSAFE® programs are based on Bionomics TM, a field within ergonomics training that includes the adjustment of the physical environment and the body. These bionomic programs have been used in diverse industries such as aerospace, municipalities, banks, hospitals, warehouse/trucking firms as well as many small businesses to substantially reduce repetitive stress injuries and Workers Compensation costs.

**"The curriculum was excellent," says Dominguez. "They looked over the worksites and evaluated each type of work station and designed an ergonomics training program specifically for us. The staff really paid attention. They were given training that they could apply to every day work life."**

The F.I.T. training sessions are set up to mimic conditions in the worksite and employees bring their own chairs. They're taught how to adjust their equipment, the importance of wrist support and how to modify their positions and posture to reduce the risk of RSI. The goal of the workshop is for participants to be able to modify any workstation for their own bodies.

#### **RESULTS:**

The staff evaluations of the program have all been positive. One executive secretary was told by her doctor that she was in pain because she just too old to work and should take early retirement. "Once she got the ergonomics training and readjusted her work station and her posture, her pain went away," laughs Dominguez. "She went back to the doctor and told him he was too old to work on her! She did not have any pain after going through this program."

The department's Workers Compensation costs have been cut dramatically and where there were 19 to 20 claims per year, there are now only one or two.

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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.