

IHSA health and safety management perspective

A common feature of all workplaces is the presence of musculoskeletal disorder (MSD) hazards. Those are things that can cause injuries and disorders of the musculoskeletal system. The musculoskeletal system includes muscles, tendons, nerves, bursa, blood vessels, joints, spinal discs, and ligaments. MSDs do not include musculoskeletal injuries or disorders that are the direct result of a fall, being struck by or against something, being caught in or on something, vehicle collisions, or violence.

According to the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB), more than 40 per cent of all lost-time compensation claims in Ontario are for MSDs.

Just as for other workers throughout the province, MSDs hazards have been identified as a top risk for IHSA employees. Using the OHSCO MSD Prevention Guideline Parts 1, 2, and 3 as a framework, IHSA has developed an MSD Prevention Program. The program has the following goals:

- to increase awareness of MSDs
- to decrease the risk of MSDs
- to adapt the jobs and workplace to the capabilities of the employees
- to identify MSD prevention strategies as a priority in cost containment, productivity, and quality assurance
- to promote and support the health and safety of all employees
- to provide equipment, resources, record keeping, and effective training

Part of IHSA's commitment to minimizing exposure to MSD hazards is to support the Ergonomic Change Team (ECT), which is a resource for IHSA's health and safety program. The ECT helps IHSA to recognize, assess, and control MSD hazards and to evaluate preventive measures; makes recommendations (to the JHSC and management) for strengthening efforts at MSD prevention; and informs IHSA staff about its

activities. The team consists of workers and members of management who have received four days of Ergonomic Change Team training.

One of the ECT's recent activities has been to develop and distribute to all staff members a discomfort survey that will allow IHSA to set a baseline and measure future progress in reducing MSDs. The team is also creating short video clips to help employees with proper workstation setup. All employees will be required to complete an assessment of their own workstations. The assessments will also allow the ECT to identify and prioritize workstations that need further assessment.

IHSA employees are encouraged to take regular breaks to reduce exposure to static postures. Sitting or standing for long periods of time reduces blood flow and can cause muscle tension, stiffness, and strain in the neck, arms, wrists, hands, back, and legs.

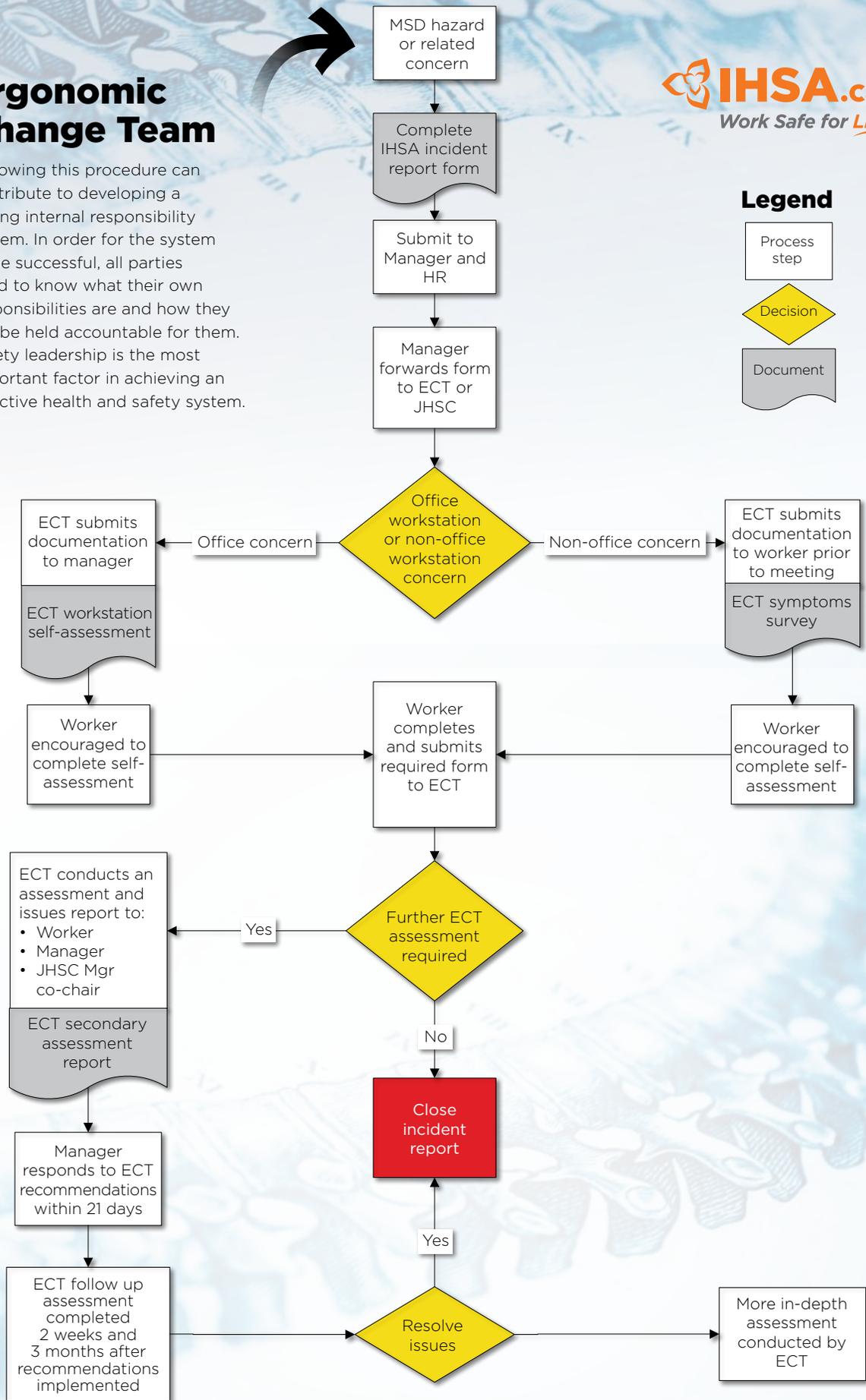
Everyone should take a five-minute break every hour. People doing data entry should take a five-minute break for every 30 minutes of continuous work at a computer. Frequent, short breaks where a person can relax regularly and stretch their muscles are preferable to longer, fewer breaks, and research has shown that they do not reduce productivity. Employees should do the opposite of what they've just been doing. For example, a person who has been sitting should get up and walk around.

At IHSA, all new employees receive a pamphlet outlining proper workstation setup as part of their orientation. Proper workstation setup includes adjusting their chair, keyboard and mouse, monitor, and other things that they use frequently.

It is essential that everyone in the workplace understand that they are a necessary part of the Internal Responsibility System (IRS). The ECT has developed a reporting process for MSD hazards:

Ergonomic Change Team

Following this procedure can contribute to developing a strong internal responsibility system. In order for the system to be successful, all parties need to know what their own responsibilities are and how they will be held accountable for them. Safety leadership is the most important factor in achieving an effective health and safety system.



Legend

