

# Ergonomics at work

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# The Administration of Occupational Safety and Health

- ✓ Center for occupational safety and health in Iceland
- ✓ One organization-62 employees
- ✓ Most in Reykjavik
- ✓ Also 8 other locations around the country



# The Administration of Occupational Safety and Health

Our main vision is that

**EVERYONE RETURN SAFE HOME FROM WORK**

That is ensured by

- ✓ Labour inspections
- ✓ Digital communications
- ✓ Work machinery and equipments inspections
- ✓ Developing promotional and educational materials in line with the need of workplaces
- ✓ Encouraging social dialogue on the importance of occupational health and safety
- ✓ Deliver messages to people directly through the media, including social media



## Director

### Department of Occupational Safety and Health

Execution and follow up's, workplace inspections, digital communication, work machines and equipment.

### Department of Finance and Analysis

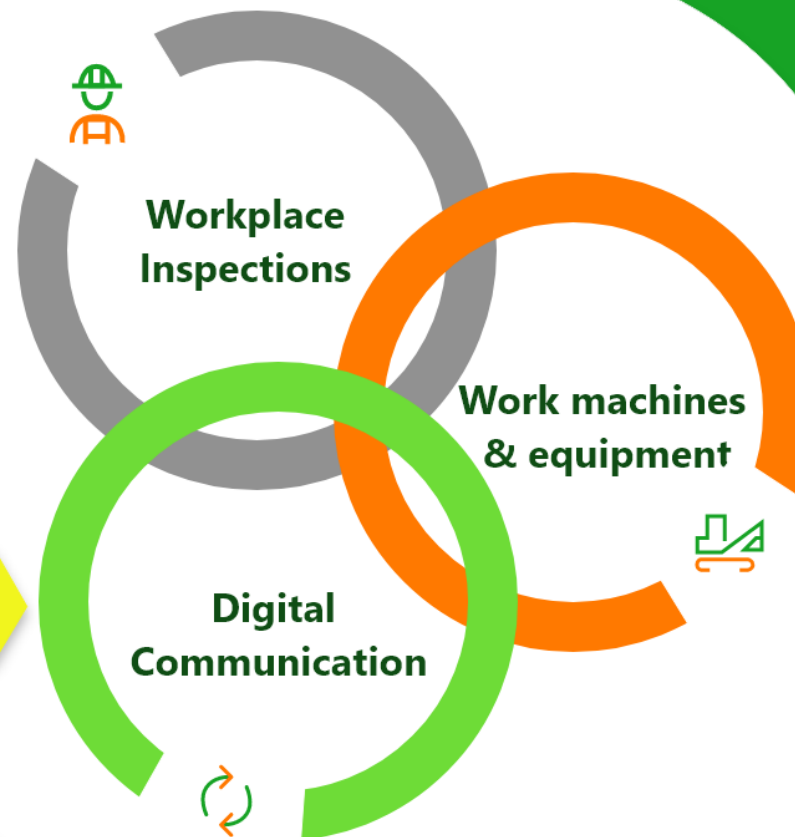
Finance, operation, Information technology, analysis and document control

Information Technology

### Department of People, Information and Innovation

Human Resources, service, team support, project management and communications

Project Management Office



# Labour Inspections Teams



**PRIORITIZE** 



# How do we prioritize inspections?

# Labour inspection - Initiative

- ✓ Emphasis determined in the yearly work plan based on risk analysis and development in work accident in certain sectors
- ✓ Usually announced with few days notice
- ✓ Meeting with managers and safety representatives or safety officers
- ✓ Random talks with employees
- ✓ Instructions with time limits given in reports





# Labour inspections – Complaints

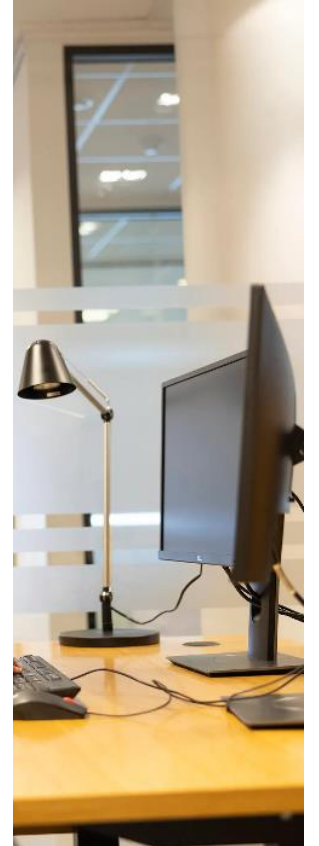
- ✓ Following a complaint, it is assessed whether labour inspection is carried out
- ✓ It is never stated whether the inspections is due to a complaint or based on the organisation's initiative
- ✓ Regular inspection focusing on the issues to which the complaint relates
- ✓ Instructions with time limits given in reports
- ✓ It is also possible the complaint leads to digital communication with the workplace





# Digital communications

- ✓ Emphasis determined in the yearly work plan based on risk analysis and development in work accident in certain sectors
- ✓ In 2023 the Administration started a digital communications requesting data that workplaces must have in accordance with the law
  - Written Health and Safety Plan
  - Whistleblower protection rules
  - Time reports for children & teenagers
- ✓ Instructions with time limits given in reports
- ✓ The Administration reaches out to more workplaces than before



# Labour inspections-other

- ✓ Labour inspections at constructions sites
- ✓ Labour inspections due to work accidents
- ✓ Labour inspections due to licensing



# Foundations of Workplace Safety and Health

Ergonomic guidance and risk assessment

# Written Health and Safety Plan

- ✓ All employers are responsible for preparing a written Health and Safety Plan for the workplace, regardless of its size
- ✓ According to the legal framework the written Health and Safety Plan must have:
  - Risk assessment with a good overview of risk factors and how to reduce risk and prevent accidents in the workplace
  - A plan for health protection, including a plan for preventive measures, which are based on the risk assessment
  - Policy against bullying, harassment and violence in the workplace
  - Emergency plan
- ✓ Not all workplaces have this Health and Safety Plan up to date

# Occupational Safety and Health

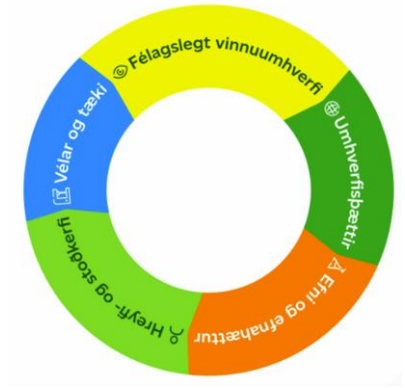
A risk assessment in the workplace is made of five main elements of Occupational Safety and Health. The purpose is to promote safety and health in the workplace so that everyone can get home safe.

- ✓ **Ergonomics**/Musculoskeletal system
- ✓ Psychosocial work environment
- ✓ Chemicals
- ✓ Work environmental factors
- ✓ Machines and equipment



# Risk assessment-ergonomics

## Guidance on our web page



- ✓ Check lists that are focused on different types of industries (e.g. one for shops, another for hospitals, another for schools and so on)
- ✓ Specialized check lists - „Body posture“, „Monotonous work“, „Carrying weights“
- ✓ Education and good advice regarding:
  - Work-related musculoskeletal symptoms (prevention)
  - Environmental factors that can influence our musculoskeletal system (temperature, noise)
  - Equipment (the importance of a good design, adjustability, assistive devices)
  - Good body posture (the importance of diversity)
  - Carrying heavy weights (risk factors and good advice)
- ✓ The importance of conducting the risk assessment in cooperation with employers and employees so that it is targeted and yields real improvements

# Guidance on webpage- Online education

- ✓ Our education material was revised and standardized for all students
- ✓ Lightens the workload on our own staff
  - Therefore more available for inspections
- ✓ Noticable increase in demand for education in more languages then icelandic (english and polish)
- ✓ Course for workplace safety committees
  - Ergonomic chapter
  - Short and focused videos, interactive material, questions
  - User friendly and personalized



Sérhæfing - Hreyfi-  
og stoðkerfi

100% Lokið

Halda áfram



Sérhæfing -  
Sálfélagslegt  
vinnuumhverfi

50% Lokið

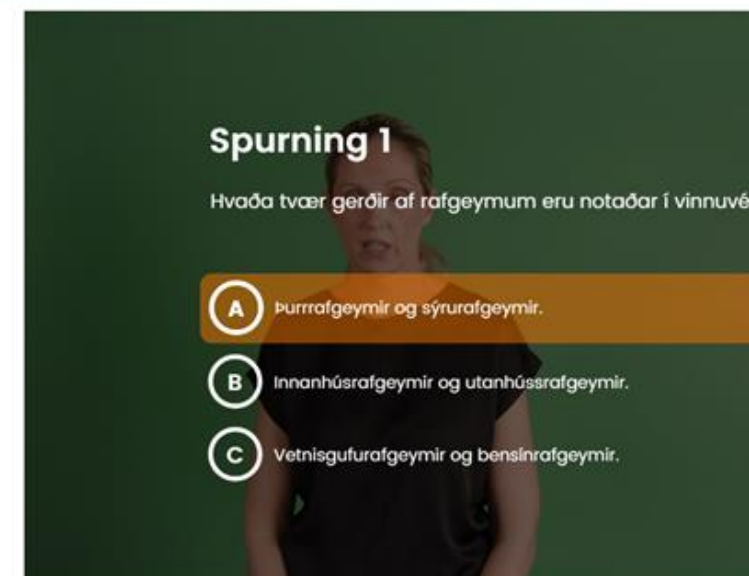
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Sérhæfing: Efni og  
efnanotkun

25% Lokið

Halda áfram





# A typical inspection.....

.....from an ergonomic's perspective

# Starting the conversation

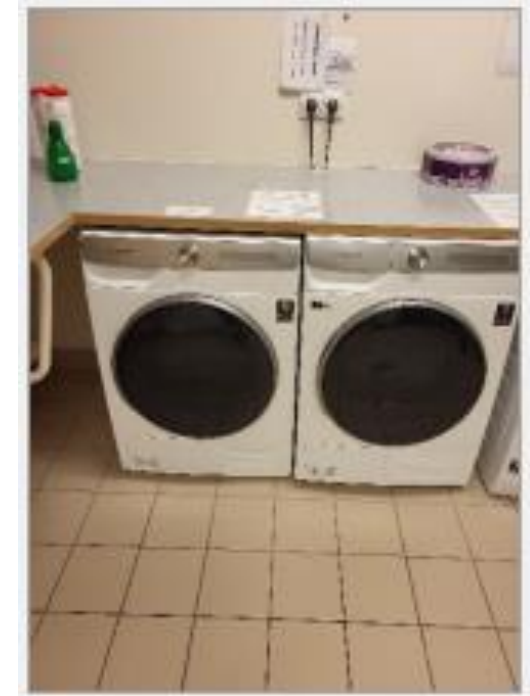
- ✓ Does the workplace have „Risk assessment“ and a „Health Protection and Prevention Plan“ for the employees where ergonomic factors are included?
- ✓ Does it include risks from monotonous work, lifting, pushing or pulling heavy loads, jobs that require difficult posture for long periods of time or jobs that require employees to work at an uncomfortable pace?
- ✓ Do the employees get education and training on how to prevent musculoskeletal problems?
- ✓ Do the employees get education and training on correct use of assistive devices?
- ✓ Are there employees on a sick leave due to musculoskeletal problems?

# What I look for

- ✓ Are there assistive devices available for the employees?
- ✓ Are they using them correctly?
- ✓ Is everyday equipment (chairs, tables, computer screens, assembly lines....) adjustable and in good condition?
- ✓ Do the employees have the opportunity to change body positions during work?
- ✓ Do the employees have sufficient space to work and apply good body posture?

# Instructions & follow up

- ✓ Written Health and Safety Plan
- ✓ Instructions for ergonomic's
  - General
  - Specific
- ✓ We follow up on the instructions with given time limit
- ✓ If there is no response → law team → day fines
- ✓ Change from 1<sup>st</sup> of January 2025: direct fines





# Some of our main challenges.....

# Our main challenges-internal

- ✓ Not all inspectors have knowledge of ergonomics
  - Importance of good team work & communication
  - The benefits of a small company
  - Importance of good material for both inspectors and employers
- ✓ Regulation on ergonomics is old and not always up to date
  - New regulation in progress
  - The goal: Take into account the possible stress on the musculoskeletal system when designing and organizing workplaces and take all possible actions to minimize the stress
- ✓ Inspectors focus on more „obvious hazards“ e.g. dangerous machines or chemicals



# Our Main Challenges-External

- ✓ Employers are not aware that they have to have a written Health and Safety Plan (and don't know what it is!)
  - Working on a new campaign: Explaining the components of the Plan in a human manner
- ✓ Promote the participation of everyone in the workplace in active occupational health and safety work where everyone takes the responsibility
  - Every day inspections
  - Head, shoulders, knees and toes = Campaign to increase knowledge of young people and their employers
- ✓ Only reach 5-7% of workplaces in Iceland
- ✓ Reduce work accidents and work related musculoskeletal symptoms





# Our Main Challenges-External

## Work related musculoskeletal symptoms

- ✓ Garbage industry

Working in all kind of situations

- ✓ People working from home

Working situation not always ideal

- ✓ Teachers, prison staff, social workers ...

Physical abuse and threats

- ✓ Construction industry

Heavy lifting and repetetive work

- ✓ Health care in people's home

Where is the line between an individual's home and the working area of the staff?

- ✓ Women working in healthcare and education sectors

Experience more pressure & stress

More likely to disappear from the labour market

# Some of our recent work.....

... And how we use it to solve challenges




# Posters for construction workers:

## ✓ Posters with good advice regarding:

- Body posture at work
- Lifting heavy weights
- Monotonous work

Everyone home safe – through the working life

## Good advice for monotonous work






- onous
- ularly
- basis
- s can
- al system

- ✓ Pay special attention to wrists when you have to repeat monotonous movements
- ✓ Pay attention to the neck and shoulders due to work above shoulders
- ✓ Wear knee pads if you have to kneel

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Everyone home safe – through the working life

## Good advice when lifting heavy weights





- ✓ Use appropriate lifting equipment
- ✓ Keep the load as close to the body as possible
- ✓ Make sure you have a good grip before lifting
- ✓ Get help from others or take more trips
- ✓ Keep your feet apart for better balance
- ✓ Bend your knees, use your hips and thighs to lift — do not use your back
- ✓ Avoid twisting your spine or neck
- ✓ Keep heavy loads at waist level and don't lift loads above shoulder height

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Everyone home safe – through the working life

## Take care of correct body posture



- ✓ Maintain equal distribution of body weight whether working standing, sitting or kneeling
- ✓ Balance the weight of the work clothes, take off the work belt during breaks and remove tools that are not in use
- ✓ Use tools with good handles that distribute pressure evenly across the palm
- ✓ Keep the back straight a
- ✓ Keep the elbows as close to the body as possible
- ✓ Have good support under your feet

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# Head, shoulders, knees and toes

Let's think about:  
**head,**  
**shoulders,**  
**knees and**  
**toes!**

The work environment affects employees from head to toe.

Effective occupational health and safety work involves looking at the big picture and considering factors that affect mental and physical health.





## What is occupational health and safety?

Occupational health and safety includes ensuring the safety and well-being of employees in their work environment. The goal is always that everyone gets home safe.

[Read more](#)



### ✓ On our web:

<https://island.is/hugsum-um-hoefud-herdar-hne-og-taer-vid-vinnu>

### ✓ Joint website with VIRK:

<https://hhht.is/en-gb>

## Well-being at work

The safety and well-being of employees should be fundamental in every workplace. The organization of the workplace is the foundation, but management and communication are also important. It is important to build trust in workplaces and promote a healthy workplace culture. We can all make a difference and lay a solid foundation for our own work environment and that of others

[Read more](#)





## ***Good posture is essential***

Good physical posture and regular exercise have a positive effect on health and well-being, today and in the future. Different jobs come with different challenges, so it's important to regularly pay attention to how we use our bodies at work.

[Read more](#)

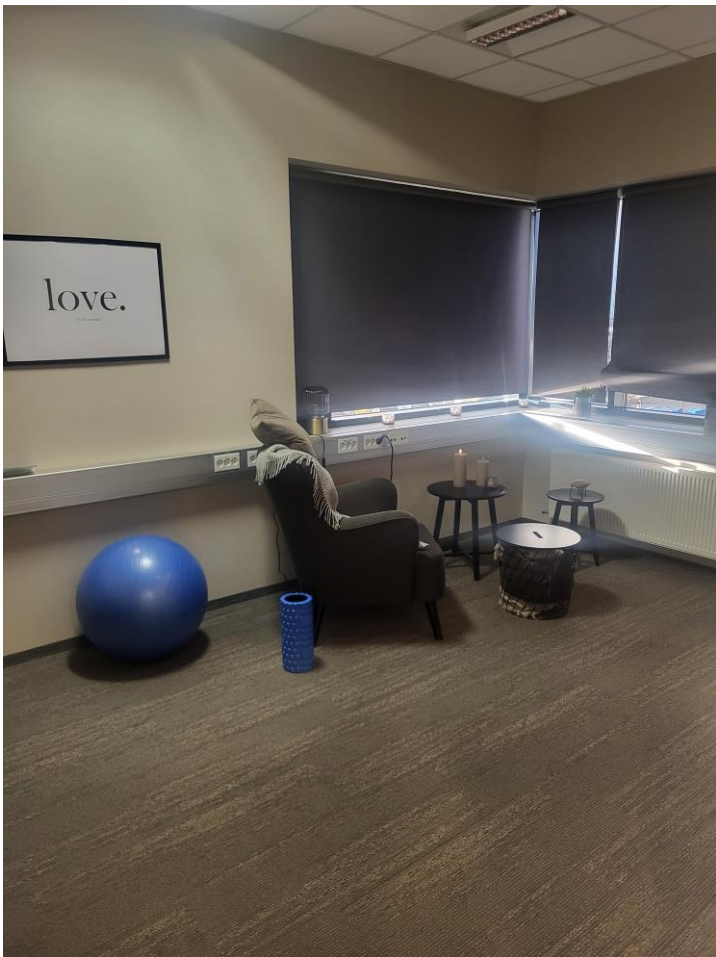
# Good ergonomics at work.....

.....Practise what you preach









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FRUMKVÆÐI • FORVARNIR • FAGMENNSKA



Thank you

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