



Hospitality Industry Ergonomics Guide



The hospitality industry is renowned for its dedication to guest satisfaction and service excellence. Behind the scenes, however, numerous ergonomic challenges confront hospitality professionals daily. From hotel cleaning and janitorial duties to restaurant operations, hospitality professionals engage in many activities that require meticulous attention to detail. Our goal in this guide is to help you address these challenges and create a work environment that prevents injuries, prioritizes employee well-being and enhances productivity.



Hotel Cleaning/Janitorial

Exposure:

- Employees often lift heavy loads, bend and adopt awkward postures when emptying garbage containers and mop buckets.
- Routine maintenance tasks, such as replacing light bulbs, require extended overhead arm postures.

Solutions:

- Implementing a policy encouraging frequent emptying of trash receptacles can control waste weight, reducing the risk of strain and injury.
- Providing elevated surfaces, such as luggage racks or tables, for changing trash can liners promotes a more upright posture, decreasing strain on the back and shoulders.
- Utilizing mechanized trash dumpers and mop buckets with drain openings minimizes manual lifting and bending, reducing the risk of musculoskeletal injuries.
- Training employees on effective biomechanics, such as bending at the knees, maintaining a straight back and keeping loads closer to the body, enhances safety and reduces the risk of injury.

Dusting/General Cleaning

Exposure:

- Staff members often sustain overhead arm postures while dusting elevated surfaces and engage in kneeling, bending and twisting during manual cleaning tasks.
- Excessive pushing force is required while vacuuming, increasing the risk of strain and injury.

Solutions:

- Equipping staff with ergonomic cleaning tools, such as lightweight microfiber cloths and dusters with telescoping handles, reduces strain during overhead cleaning and promotes safer work practices.
- Providing ergonomic aids like lightweight step stools makes reaching elevated surfaces safer and reduces the risk of falls and injuries.
- Implementing rotation schedules to alternate between tasks reduces repetitive strain on specific muscle groups and promotes employee well-being.
- Ensuring vacuum cleaners are well-maintained and equipped with ergonomic handles minimizes pushing force and reduces the risk of strain and injury.

Making Beds

Exposure:

- When tucking sheets beneath mattresses, employees often reach and adopt awkward postures and lift and push heavy linen carts.

Solutions:

- Organizing linen carts to store sheets at a convenient height reduces the need for employees to bend excessively, minimizing the risk of strain and injury.
- Investing in fitted sheets streamlines making beds and reduces manual stretching and tucking, decreasing strain on the back and shoulders.
- Introducing motorized carts or assistive devices, such as sheet tuckers or mattress lifters, alleviates physical strain associated with lifting mattresses and bending, promoting employee safety and well-being.
- Optimizing room layouts to allow ample space around beds reduces the need for employees to work in confined areas and minimizes awkward postures, reducing the risk of strain and injury.

Restaurant Operations

Exposure:

- Employees often endure repetitive tasks and prolonged standing in backhouse operations, such as food preparation and dishwashing, and adopt awkward positions that can lead to musculoskeletal injuries.

Solutions:

- Providing anti-fatigue mats and supportive footwear reduces discomfort and fatigue associated with prolonged standing, promoting employee comfort and well-being.
- Offering ergonomic tools and equipment, such as adjustable-height workstations and utensils with ergonomic handles, minimizes strain during food preparation and dishwashing, reducing the risk of musculoskeletal injuries.
- Implementing regular rest breaks and job rotation schedules prevents overexertion and repetitive strain injuries among kitchen staff, promoting employee health and well-being.

Program Management

Effective program management is essential for integrating ergonomic practices into hospitality operations. This includes:

- Conducting regular ergonomic assessments to identify and address potential risk factors.
- Providing comprehensive training programs on ergonomics and safe work practices for all employees.
- Establishing clear protocols for reporting ergonomic concerns and incidents and implementing timely corrective actions.
- Collaborating with industry regulators and occupational health experts to stay abreast of emerging ergonomic trends and regulations.

Prioritizing ergonomics in the hospitality industry is not only a matter of compliance but also a strategic investment in employee health, productivity and guest satisfaction. By proactively addressing ergonomic challenges and implementing effective risk management strategies, your hospitality establishment can create a safer, more sustainable work environment for your staff while delivering exceptional guest experiences.

Setting Up the Cleaning Cart

Exposure:

- Employees often push, pull and reach while maneuvering carts through hallways and overload carts with cleaning materials and supplies, leading to the use of considerable force.

Solutions:

- Arranging cleaning supplies on carts strategically to place heavier items at waist level reduces strain on the back and shoulders and promotes safer cart handling practices.
- Training employees in proper cart-handling techniques, emphasizing the use of both hands for pushing and avoiding excessive loads, reduces the risk of strain and injury.
- Implementing regular cart maintenance checks ensures smooth maneuverability and prevents accidents due to faulty wheels or overloaded carts, enhancing employee safety.

References:

A comprehensive review by Buchanan et al. highlighted the elevated risk of musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) among hotel room cleaners compared to other job categories within the hospitality industry. [Buchanan et al., 2020].

California/OSHA Regulations.

The Employer's Hotel Housekeeper Musculoskeletal Injury Prevention Program Factsheet, California Department of Industrial Relations.

To learn more about managing your risk and increasing efficiency, visit cna.com/riskcontrol.

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