

# *LOSS CONTROL BULLETIN*

## *REPETITIVE MOTION INJURIES*

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Loss Control: Activities to Prevent Accidents or Reduce the Cost of Accidents in the Workplace

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Title 8, Section 5110 of the general industry safety orders, also known as the “ergonomic” regulation, became law effective July 3, 1997. On 10/29/99 the 3<sup>rd</sup> Circuit Court of Appeals upheld a prior trial court ruling that all employers, regardless of the number of employees, are subject to these regulations. The major purpose of the regulation was to reduce the number of work related injuries that resulted from work conditions and practices that precipitated musculoskeletal injuries typically referred to as “repetitive motion injuries” (RMIs).

For the purpose of the regulation, a RMI is a musculoskeletal injury that has been objectively identified and diagnosed by a licensed physician. Some typical injuries which have resulted from repetitive tasks include bursitis, ligamentous or muscular sprains or strains, neck tension syndrome, nerve entrapment (e.g., carpal tunnel syndrome), stenosing, tenosynovitis, and tendon-related disorders and hand-arm vibration syndrome.

An employer becomes “subject to the law” after there have been at least two RMI injuries (of identical work activity) occurring within the past 12 month period. The 12 month period is a “rolling 12 months” so that every RMI injury begins a new “12 month period”. Once an employer becomes “subject to the law”, the employer is required to develop and implement a program designed to minimize future RMIs. Section 5110, paragraph (b) addresses the requirements of such a program.

Bear in mind that the field of ergonomics is extremely broad in its nature and there are a wide range of available resources available to, and should be pursued by employers, which include, but are not limited to, publications from CAL/OSHA (*Easy Ergonomics*), videos and specialized ergonomic consultation from CompWest Insurance Company’s Loss Control Department, videos and publications from various safety organizations (the U.S. Dept. of Health & Human Services, and the National Institute for Occupational Safety & Health), assistance from free consulting services (CAL/OSHA Consultation Service) and numerous books written on the subject that are available in most bookstores and libraries.

**For the specific regulation dealing with RMIs, a CompWest Insurance Co. Loss Control Bulletin is also available for the text of the regulation itself (Subchapter 7. General Safety Orders (GISO); Group 15: Occupational Noise; Article 106: Ergonomics.**