Awkward Postures – Safety Talk

Awkward postures are deviations of body parts from their neutral position. Working in these postures is a contributing factor to musculoskeletal disorders.

Awkward postures increase the total exertion required to complete a job:
- The body must apply force to joints and muscles to deviate body parts from the neutral position
- The further the deviation, the more force that is applied
- The further the deviation, the less force you are able to apply to your tool
- Working in awkward postures will cause you to fatigue faster

Here are some common examples of awkward postures:

- Extended wrist
- Flexed wrist
- Bent neck
- Squatting
- Working overhead
- Back bent forward
- Reaching
- Kneeling

Preventing musculoskeletal disorders
- Select tools that will allow you to work in neutral postures.
- Use height-adjustable workbenches and chairs.
- Avoid bending over by using lift devices to hold workpieces at waist-height.
- Use step stools or ladders to avoid reaching overhead.
- Perform work at the proper heights:
  - Above the elbows for precision work
  - At the elbows for light work
  - Between the waist and elbows for heavy work
- When awkward postures cannot be avoided:
  - Limit the duration in the posture
  - Take regular breaks
  - Perform a variety of jobs to change postures
  - Complete forceful actions closer to neutral posture

Ergonomics and Back Safety Training are offered by Environmental Health and Safety once a quarter.