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Ergonomics Risk Reduction and Industrial Hygiene Activities in Chemical Industries

K. Boopathy [1], K Jeevananth[2]
[1]Associate professor, Dept. of Safety and Fire Engineering Excel Engineering College, Namakkal, Tamilnadu, India.
[2]PG-Student, M.E-Industrial Safety Engineering, Dept. of Safety and Fire Engineering Excel Engineering College, Namakkal, Tamilnadu, India.
Email ID: *boopathy.k.1978@gmail.com[1], kjeevananth@dow.com[2]*

Abstract
The chemical industry, known for its hazardous operations, faces significant challenges in ensuring the health and safety of its workforce. This project focuses on reducing ergonomic risks and enhancing industrial hygiene practices to improve worker well-being and productivity in chemical manufacturing environments. Ergonomics risk reduction involves redesigning workstations, tools, and tasks to minimize musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) caused by repetitive tasks, heavy lifting, and poor posture. The project assesses high-risk tasks and implements measures like adjustable workstations, lifting aids, and job rotation. Simultaneously, industrial hygiene addresses exposure to harmful chemicals, dust, vapors, and noise. The project evaluates air quality, PPE, ventilation systems, and safety programs to minimize risks like respiratory illnesses and skin conditions. The integrating ergonomic and industrial hygiene interventions, this project aims to reduce injuries, enhance productivity, and ensure compliance with occupational health standards, creating a safer, more sustainable working environment in chemical industries.
Keywords: *: Ergonomics, Industrial hygiene, Musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs), Worker well-being, Occupational health, Productivity.*

1. Introduction
In chemical industries, worker safety and well-being are critical components of maintaining a productive and healthy workforce. Ergonomics, the science of designing work environments, tasks, and tools to fit the worker's physical capabilities, plays a significant role in minimizing injuries and enhancing efficiency. The nature of the chemical industry often involves repetitive tasks, heavy lifting, hazardous chemicals, and physically demanding work, all of which can lead to various health risks. Ergonomics risk reduction is, therefore, essential in mitigating these risks and promoting a safer and more comfortable workplace. The chemical industry is prone to a variety of workplace injuries, particularly those related to musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) such as back pain, carpal tunnel syndrome, and tendonitis. These disorders are often caused by repetitive movements, awkward postures, excessive force, or prolonged exposure to poor work conditions. In environments such as chemical plants, where workers may handle heavy equipment, chemicals, or assembly tasks for long hours, the risk of these injuries can be significant. Ergonomics aims to address these challenges by modifying the physical work environment, reducing unnecessary physical strain, and improving the tools and equipment used by workers. Ergonomics risk reduction starts with a thorough assessment of the workplace to identify tasks that may lead to injury. [1-5]

1.1. Industrial Hygiene Activities in Chemical Industries
Industrial hygiene is a crucial aspect of ensuring worker health and safety in chemical industries, where employees are often exposed to hazardous substances, dangerous chemicals, and toxic environments. The primary goal of industrial hygiene is to anticipate, recognize, evaluate, and control workplace hazards that can cause harm to workers'

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health. This involves systematically addressing a wide range of environmental risks, such as airborne contaminants, chemical exposures, noise, and other potentially harmful factors that could lead to acute or chronic health conditions. In chemical industries, workers may be exposed to hazardous chemicals, dust, vapors, and fumes, many of which can have immediate or long-term health effects. For instance, exposure to substances like benzene, asbestos, or various solvents can lead to respiratory diseases, cancer, and other serious conditions. Industrial hygiene practices aim to identify these risks and implement strategies to minimize exposure, thereby ensuring that the workplace remains safe for employees. [6]

2. Theoretical Background

Ergonomics is a scientific discipline that designs and arranges workplaces, products, and systems to ensure they fit and adapt to the people who use them. Ergonomics is often used interchangeably with 'human factors,' especially in North America. The primary goal of ergonomics is to create more comfortable, efficient, and safe environments by considering human beings' physical and psychological needs and limitations. Ergonomics is important for a multitude of reasons, encompassing the well-being of individuals, efficiency, and economic considerations. [7]

- Health and Safety
- Comfort
- Productivity and Efficiency
- Quality of Work
- Employee Engagement and Morale
- Economic Benefits
- Inclusivity and Diversity
- Adaptability to Change
- Legal and Regulatory Compliance
- Consumer Appeal

2.1. Ergonomic Risk Assessment and Data Collection

Ergonomic assessments are the backbone of the ergonomics improvement process. Having a standard method of conducting these assessments gives a clear view of the risk present in the workplace. Prioritizing allows you to effectively communicate, prioritize, and implement ergonomic solutions in the workplace.

Ergonomic risks are defined in the Ergonomics Regulations as: "A characteristic or action in the workplace, workplace conditions, or a combination thereof that may impair overall system performance and human well-being" Musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) are injuries and disorders of the musculoskeletal system. Various physical or environment risk factors may have contributed to the disorder's development. They typically occur after months or years of overuse and "wear and tear". These injuries may occur at various body part locations. Self-assessing and identifying risk factors for each body part when performing a task can reduce or prevent the development of these injuries. All tasks consist of four primary risk factors that can affect each area of the body. The goal is to assess and minimize these factors as much as possible in order to minimize the risk of an injury and enhance productivity.

- Posture
- Repetition
- Force
- Time

Assess risk factors for each body part. First, evaluate your posture for head and neck and select the associated value in the Head/Neck posture column.

Figure 1 Factor Posture-1

Figure 2 Factor Posture-2

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Figure 3 Factor Posture-3

Table 1 Repetition

Task Speed	Value
Very slow motions or consistent long pauses in movement Repeating <3x/minute	Neutral
Steady motions or infrequent pauses in movement Repeating ~4-9x/minute	Moderate
Rapid steady motion with no regular pauses in movement Repeating > 10x/minute	Extreme

3. Environmental Ergonomics Risk Assessment

Environmental ergonomics risk assessment involves evaluating how the physical work environment affects worker health, safety, and productivity. It focuses on identifying hazards related to factors such as lighting, temperature, noise, workstation design, and ventilation. Assessing these risks includes analyzing how the work environment might contribute to discomfort, fatigue, or musculoskeletal disorders. The goal is to ensure that the environment supports workers' physical capabilities, reduces strain, and minimizes distractions or stress. By addressing these environmental factors, companies can enhance worker performance, reduce injuries, and create a more comfortable and efficient workplace. HAVS (Hand-Arm Vibrations) = the mechanical vibration that, when transmitted to the human hand-arm system, entails risks to the health and safety of workers, in particular vascular, bone or joint, neurological or muscular disorders. This is transmitted into the hand/arm by the use of vibrating equipment/tools used during a work activity. WBVS (Whole-Body Vibrations) = the mechanical vibration that, when transmitted to the whole body, entails risks to the health and safety of workers, in particular lower-back disorders and trauma of the spine. This is transmitted into the body through the seat or the feet by workplace machines and vehicles. [8-9]

Table 2 Illumination

Class of Task	Recommended Maintenance Illuminance (lux)	Characteristics of the activity and interior
Intermittent use	80	Interiors requiring intermittent use with visual tasks limited to movement and orientation
Simple	160	Occasional reading of clearly printed documents for short periods
Ordinary or moderately easy	240	Continuously occupied interiors where moderately easy visual tasks with high contrasts or large detail are required
Moderately difficult	400	Areas where visual tasks are moderately difficult with low contrasts
Difficult	600	Areas where visual tasks are difficult with low contrasts

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Table 3 Vibration

Description	HAVS	WBVS
Exposure Limit Values	5.0	1.15
Exposure Action Values	2.5	0.5

4. Thermal stress

Heat stress causes discomfort, increases physiological strain, decreases productivity and performance and can increase accident rates. Thermal stress is an important factor in many industrial situations. It can seriously affect the productivity and the health of the individual and diminish tolerance to other environmental hazards. However, the assessment of the thermal stress and the translation of the stress in terms of physiological and psychological strain is complex. Thermal stress or heat stress can be quantified by using heat index chart. Based on the results from the chart one can take decision to protect people form heat stress. [10]

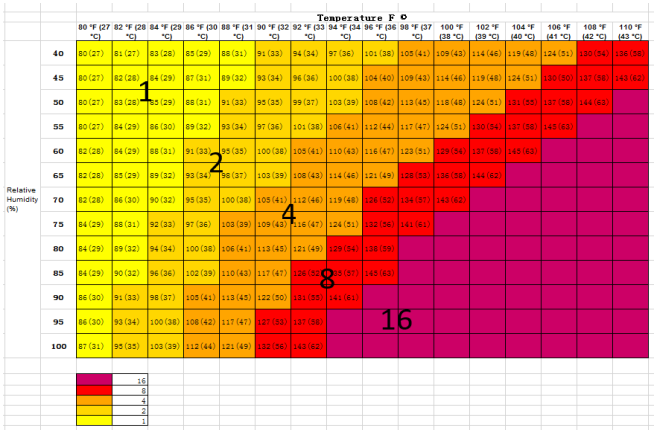

Figure 4 Temperature-Relative Humidity Factor

5. Industrial Hygiene

The purpose of Industrial Hygiene (IH) Monitoring is to measure airborne concentrations of chemicals in the workplace IH monitoring results are used to identify where exposure controls are needed or to evaluate the effectiveness of existing controls When IH monitoring is conducted on a worker, the results are used to demonstrate compliance the regulatory or internal exposure limits and verify the health of our workers is being protected. [11]

6. Risk Assessment

In Chemical industries ,manual activities are very common .In this chapter we are going to talk to about manual charging of surfactant and monomers from drums, finished goods loading from Industrial Bulk container(IBC) to bulk tankers and Industrial Bulk Container(IBC) tilting activity for empty out and cleaning after every activity etc. [12] Illumination refers to the process of providing light to an environment to ensure visibility and enhance safety, comfort, and productivity. In industrial settings, proper illumination is crucial for preventing accidents, reducing eye strain, and improving work efficiency. It involves selecting appropriate lighting systems, such as natural or artificial lights, and ensuring they meet regulatory standards for different work environments. [13]

Heat Index - Heat Stress Job Aid

Evaluation of Conditions & Mitigations		
Item	Job Conditions	Mitigations
Heat index *	>41-51 degC (>104-124 degF)	>41-51 degC (>104-124 degF)
Hot Surface/Radiant Temp	In Immediate Area,Outdoor Task	In Immediate Area,Outdoor Task
Total Task Duration	5 -60 min	5 -60 min
PPE used	Dust suit/ Apron/ RPE Used	Dust suit/ Apron/ RPE Used
Work intensity	Heavy	Heavy
% Work (per Hour)	75 to 100% (Continuous)	25 to 50%
Fluid Replacement	Drink water > 0.75 liter/hr / Located Far/ Remote from Job Site	Drink water > 1 liter/hr / Near Job Site (within 5 minutes)
Engineering control	No	AC unit
Cooling PPE used	No	No
Degree of Exposure	8	2
Priority	Priority 2 (High)	Priority 3 (Moderate)
WARNING MESSAGE !!!	Mitigation Plan Needed!	Monitor Worker Periodically

Job Aid Use Condition:

At least two mitigation plans need to consider for risk reduction.
This job aid use for healthy worker who is acclimatized with heat stress.

Figure 5 Heat Stress Protection Measures

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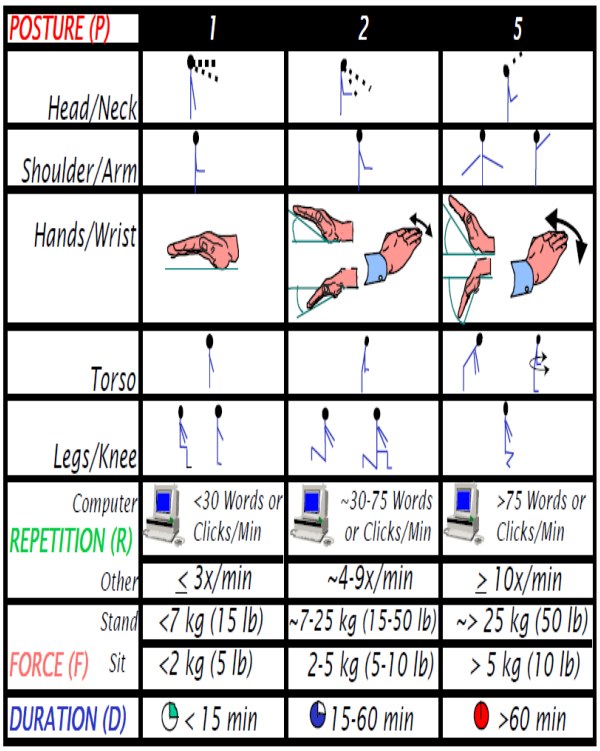

Figure 6 Risk Assessment-1

7. Control Measures

Based on the risk assessment here I am proposing the control measures to mitigate the hazards completely. All the control measures are suggested based on hierarchy method. Based on effectiveness and site suitability I am proposing the control measures [14]

Conclusion

The integration of ergonomics risk reduction and industrial hygiene activities inchemical industries is essential for safeguarding worker health and ensuring a productive work environment. As chemical industries involve the handling of potentially hazardous substances and often require physically demanding tasks, addressing both ergonomic and industrial hygiene concerns is critical to minimizing risks associated with injuries and long-term health issues. Through effective ergonomics risk reduction strategies, such as workstation design, task rotation, and the implementation of mechanical aids, the risk of musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) can be significantly reduced. By focusing on the physical capabilities of workers and improving the design of workspaces, companies can enhance employee comfort, reduce fatigue, and improve overall performance. Additionally, proper ergonomic assessments can lead to fewer workplace injuries, higher worker satisfaction, and reduced costs related to worker compensation. Simultaneously, industrial hygiene activities play a crucial role in controlling environmental hazards, including exposure to toxic chemicals, airborne pollutants, noise, and temperature extremes. The implementing effective air monitoring systems, ventilation controls, and the appropriate use of personal protective equipment (PPE), chemical industries can mitigate exposure to harmful substances, preventing respiratory diseases, skin disorders, and other health problems. Continuous health surveillance ensures early detection of any health issues, facilitating prompt interventions before they escalate. Together, ergonomics and industrial hygiene practices create a safer, healthier working environment. Implementing these measures not only helps in compliance with safety regulations but also fosters a proactive safety culture. Ultimately, reducing ergonomic risks and improving industrial hygiene practices leads to improved worker health, increased productivity, reduced downtime, and a more sustainable operation for chemical industries.

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