

To Do Business The Old-Fashioned Way.



Your Ergonomic Issues

by Grant Garland, Customer Support Services Manager

The other day I read an article entitled **Ergonomics: Targeting Material Handling** in *Material Handling Management* magazine. The article dealt with proposed OSHA standards that were

introduced in November and would impact industrial operations, including the pre-hung door business. The goal of these regulations is to prevent, reduce or eliminate musculoskeletal disorders. These disorders include sprains and strains of the back and upper extremities, which are some of the most common and most expensive injuries experienced by pre-hung door industry employees.

According to the OSHA Ergonomics web site, "Ergonomics is the science of fitting the job to the worker. When there is a mismatch between the physical requirements of the job and the physical capacity of the worker, work-related musculoskeletal disorders (WMSDs) can result. Workers who must repeat the same motion throughout their workday, who must do their work in an awkward position, who must use a great deal of force to perform their jobs, who must repeatedly lift heavy objects or who face a combination of these risk factors are most likely to develop WMSDs."

Another article in the May issue of *Building Material Dealer* magazine indicated that the proposed Ergonomics Standard for general industry would create new requirements for companies with workers in manufacturing and manual handling jobs. The article also stated that "the proposed remedies could put some dealers out of business." While these regulations are only "proposed" at this time, the issue of ergonomics is something we all need to address.

Our industry is one that is rich in tradition, making it sometimes difficult to change how we have always done things. Today, in addition to the threat of the new regulations, there are several incentives for us to look for new ways to do things. Most safety conscious companies have known for some time that safety reduces operating costs in the long run. These cost savings are the result of reduced sick pay, lower workers' compensation insurance premiums and less downtime.

We all want to keep our best employees, especially in today's tight job market. Giving the employees a safe and comfortable place to work will make them more likely to stay and make it easier to attract new people. Giving them a safe and comfortable place to work will reduce costs by contributing to fewer work-related mus-

culoskeletal disorders resulting in fewer workers' compensation claims. Fewer claims can mean lower premiums, less absenteeism and lower training costs. The end result is happier and healthier employees, thus increasing throughput while lowering cost and ultimately yielding increased profits.

Norfield Industries is concerned about ergonomics in the workplace and offers a variety of products and services to help you deal with material handling issues. For more information regarding ergonomics and the proposed OSHA Standards you may visit their web site at www.osha-slc.gov/SLTC/ergonomics.