

THE IMPACT OF ERGONOMICS IN THE PACKAGING INDUSTRY



Companies are taking a closer look at worker safety and working conditions, and how they can affect company costs and profits. Many are turning to ergonomic solutions to mitigate risks for their employees.

COSTS OF POORLY ARRANGED WORKING CONDITIONS

Overexertion which includes lifting, pushing, pulling, holding, carrying or throwing, was determined to be the leading cause of workplace injuries in 2017, and cost U.S. companies \$13.79 billion in direct costs¹. This is reflected in the packaging industry, where a primary cause of workplace injury is repetitive motion. While many occupations require repetitive motion and function without issue, a repetitive motion in a poorly arranged workspace can lead to chronic health problems for employees. These health problems, as noted above, can cost companies a substantial amount.

The direct cost of an employee being injured on the job is easy to spot and measure. It's the cost of the worker's compensation from the company. Indirect costs can be more difficult to spot, but are costly nonetheless. These indirect costs can include retraining and replacing an injured employee while they are unable to work, scheduling delays, administrative expenses and lower employee morale, all resulting from one employee workplace injury.

ERGONOMIC SOLUTIONS IN PACKAGING

Recently a supervisor was made aware that a worker was experiencing shoulder strain due to forcing boxes into a case sealer. The repetitive motion of forcing the boxes into the sealer took its toll on the arm and shoulder area, ultimately requiring attention from a doctor. The employee filed for worker's compensation due to lost time.

In order to remedy the problem and prevent other employees from experiencing similar injuries, an upgrade was made in the company's packaging operations. A Fully Automatic Random Case Sealer and a powered conveyor now automatically feed the cartons into the sealer without human assistance. This solution has eliminated the portion of the operator's job that had the potential to lead to injury and the subsequent costs associated with it.

¹ "2017 Liberty Mutual Workplace Safety Index," Liberty Mutual, retrieved 7 January 2019 from www.libertymutualgroup.com/about-liberty-mutual-site/research-institute-site/Documents/2017%20WSI.pdf

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