

La gestione del rischio di UL-WMSDs in una grande azienda del mobile imbottito

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KEY WORDS

Upper limb musculoskeletal disorders; sofa industry; production district; ergonomics

SUMMARY

«Upper limb work-related musculoskeletal disorders (UL-WMSDs) in a large factory of the upholstered furniture industry: risk management». **Background:** *The industrial production of upholstered furniture exposes workers to significant risk of occupational disorders due to ergonomics-related problems, such as repetitive strain and movements of the upper limb, manual load lifting, prolonged static postures.* **Objective:** *This paper describes the main measures taken by the biggest company in the “sofa sector” in southern Italy in order to solve such problems in the years 1996–2004.* **Methods:** *the classic instruments of ergonomics were used such as risk assessment, medical surveillance, training and information programmes, technological reorganization of the manufacturing process and of single working tasks.* **Results:** *The accident rate (number of accidents per million working hours) which showed an increasing trend in the previous years, rose from a value of 31 in 1996 to 51 in the years 1999–2000 (with a percentage of accidents related to load lifting in the range 25–35%). At the same time the incidence rate of work-related upper limb musculoskeletal disorders (UL-WMSDs) in the population of workers (which had increased in the meantime from 2500 to 3500 employees) reached nearly 5% in 2001, with peaks of 8–9% in the work tasks with higher exposure. Accident rates progressively fell in the following three years until a value of 20 was reached in 2004 and 2005, while the mean incidence rate of WMSDs reached a value of nearly 1%. The data need to be compared with the trends in the other companies of the sector in the same period, with an average incidence rate of WMSDs around 2% and a generally increasing trend.* **Conclusions:** *Ergonomic interventions not only concur in the management and control of negative events for workers health but also in achieving advantages in terms of lower costs and greater productivity.*