WORKSTATION ERGONOMICS

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APPROVAL:

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ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

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1 POLICY

The Marine Biological Laboratory (MBL) shall take the necessary steps to prevent or reduce the severity of musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs). The steps to be taken in the Ergonomics program include, but are not limited to, engineering controls, administrative controls, work practice controls, and the provision of personal protective equipment.

2 AUTHORITY AND RESPONSIBILITY

2.1 Environmental Health and Safety Manager is responsible for:

- Scheduling worksite analysis with the employee;
- Contacting the employee’s supervisor to inform of analysis results;
- Conducting worksite analysis, including the collection of baseline information;
- Compiling a written report with recommended changes; and
- Providing training for employees covered under this policy.

2.2 Departments are responsible for:

- Ensuring that concerned employees are allowed to obtain a worksite analysis;
- Purchasing ergonomic furniture; and
- Incurring the cost for personal protective equipment recommended by Environmental Health and Safety.

2.3 Employees are responsible for:

- Utilizing the “Workstation Guidelines” in Appendix A as a guide for initial set-up of their workstation; and
- Following any recommendations provided by Environmental Health and Safety while working at the workstation.

3 REPORTING PROCEDURE

3.1 Known or Suspected Injury

Known or suspected musculoskeletal disorders shall be reported to the Department Manager/Supervisor. The employee reporting a MSD shall inform their
supervisor of the known or suspected injury and complete a MBL Accident/Injury Report Form. The completed form should be provided to Human Resources.

3.2 Worksite Analysis

Worksite analysis identifies problem jobs or job tasks and risk factors associated with them. This essential preliminary step helps employers determine what jobs and workstations are the source of the greatest problems.

A worksite analysis shall be triggered by one of the following:

- Completion of an MBL Accident/Injury Report or injury follow-up; or
- Receiving a request from a licensed medical professional. Upon obtaining a licensed medical professional's recommendation, please contact Environmental Health and Safety at 508-289-7424 or safety@mbl.edu to schedule a worksite assessment.

4 HAZARD PREVENTION

4.1 Engineering Controls

Engineering controls are the preferred method of controlling ergonomic stresses since the primary focus of ergonomic hazard abatement is to make the job fit the person, not force the person to fit the job. Environmental Health and Safety recommends that the “Workstation Guidelines” be used as a guide while working at the computer workstation.

The following engineering control principles need to be considered when designing a work station or recommending corrective measures:

- Workstations shall be designed to accommodate the person who actually works at a given station and not for an average or typical employee;
- Workstations shall be designed so that the station can be adjusted easily to accommodate the employee assigned to the station and the equipment used at the station shall be designed for that purpose;
- The workstation shall also be sized to allow for the full range of movements required to perform assigned tasks;
• Tasks performed by the employee in the performance of his/her responsibilities shall be designed to prevent extreme postures, repetitive motion, excessive force, and static work; and
• Tools used in the performance of assigned tasks shall be designed to prevent or reduce chronic muscle contraction; awkward finger, hand, and arm positions; repetitive forceful motions; vibration; and excessive gripping, pinching, or pressing with the hand and fingers.

4.2 Administrative Controls

Administrative controls are changes in the way work in a job is assigned or scheduled that reduce the magnitude, frequency, or duration of exposure to ergonomic risk factors. Examples of administrative controls for MSD hazards include the following:

• Rotate employees to different tasks. Note: When rotating an employee to a different task, the new task shall use a different group of muscles, tendons, and nerves. Reduce the number of repetitive motions;
• Job task enlargement;
• Alternative tasks; and
• Employer-authorized changes in work pace.

4.3 Work Practice Controls

An effective program for ergonomic hazard prevention and control also includes procedures for safe and proper work practices that are understood and followed by managers, supervisors, and employees and include the following:

• Proper work techniques;
• Employee training and conditioning; and
• Proper housekeeping.

4.4 Personal Protective Equipment

Personal protective equipment such as gloves, padding, clothing, or equipment shall be designed for the intended purpose. If needed, Environmental Health and Safety will recommended personal protective equipment. Every effort shall be made to resolve the problems using engineering and administrative controls. The following guidelines should be used:
• No personal protective equipment shall be purchased without first consulting the Environmental Health and Safety Manager.
• No personal protective equipment shall be used by the employee without the employee first being trained in the equipment’s use and care.

Note: Braces, splints, and back belts are not considered personal protective equipment and when used, shall be at the direction and under the supervision of the employee’s treating physician.

5 TRAINING

Environmental Health and Safety shall facilitate training of employees covered by this policy. The curriculum of the training program shall, at a minimum, cover the following:

• Awareness of the common MSDs and their signs and symptoms.
• Review of engineering and administrative controls for workstation.

Employees shall be required to participate in on-the-job training and awareness provided by the employee’s department.

Upon hire, Workstation Guidelines will be provided to all applicable employees. EHS will provide annual ergonomics training. It may be necessary to retrain an employee as a result of injury. All training shall be documented and records maintained by Environmental Health and Safety.
**Chairs**

- Sit in one of the four reference sitting postures, reclined sitting or sitting in a chair that is easily adjustable and able to support the back and in a variety of seated postures.
- Use a chair with a backrest that is adjustable in height and angle to fit your height and keep your feet flat on the floor or on a footrest.
- Adjust the height of your chair so your feet are flat on the floor or on a footrest.
- Support the natural curve in your lower back with a lumbar roll or a rolled-up towel.
- Do not cross your legs for extended periods of time or sit on your feet.
- Support the natural curve in your lower back with a lumbar roll or a rolled-up towel.
- Do not overreach or twist your body when typing.
- Hold your shoulders relaxed and your elbows close to your body.
- Keep your shoulders relaxed and your elbows close to your body.
- Place the keyboard directly in front of the monitor, at the same height or slightly lower.
- If you use your mouse, move the keyboard slightly to the side so that your arms and wrists are parallel to the floor.
- Keep your arms close to your sides and your elbow bent about 90 degrees.
- Place the monitor at least 20 inches away from your eyes, with the top of the screen at or below eye level.

**Keyboard**

- Place the keyboard on a stable surface.
- Adjust the height of your keyboard so your hands are in a comfortable position while typing.
- If you have a keyboard, keep it at an angle or in a corner that requires minimal effort to reach.
- Do not rely on your wrist to move the mouse.
- Place the mouse close to your keyboard.
- If you use your mouse, move the mouse slightly to the side so that your arms and wrists are parallel to the floor.
- Keep your shoulders relaxed and your elbows close to your body.
- Adjust the monitor controls or brightness/contrast to minimize glare and reduce eye strain.
- If using a computer mouse, use a well-padded seat and generally follow the guidelines above for mouse use.

**Mouse**

- Place the mouse on a stable surface.
- Adjust the height of your mouse so your hands are in a comfortable position while typing.
- Keep your shoulders relaxed and your elbows close to your body.
- Do not rely on your wrist to move the mouse.
- Place the mouse close to your keyboard.
- If you use your mouse, move the mouse slightly to the side so that your arms and wrists are parallel to the floor.
- Keep your arms close to your sides and your elbow bent about 90 degrees.
- Place the monitor at least 20 inches away from your eyes, with the top of the screen at or below eye level.
- If using a computer mouse, use a well-padded seat and generally follow the guidelines above for mouse use.

**Appendix A – Workstation Guidelines**

- Rest your eyes periodically by focusing on objects farther away (e.g., a book on a wall 20 feet away).
- If using a computer mouse, use a well-padded seat and generally follow the guidelines above for mouse use.
- Do not rely on your wrist to move the mouse.
- Place the mouse close to your keyboard.
- If you use your mouse, move the mouse slightly to the side so that your arms and wrists are parallel to the floor.
- Keep your arms close to your sides and your elbow bent about 90 degrees.
- Place the monitor at least 20 inches away from your eyes, with the top of the screen at or below eye level.
- If using a computer mouse, use a well-padded seat and generally follow the guidelines above for mouse use.

**MBL Workstation Ergonomics – November 2017**
1. Feet should rest flat on the floor or be supported by a footrest.
2. Feet should be slightly forward of the knees.
3. Thighs should be parallel to the floor.
4. Hip back in chair with 1-2 inches between knees and chair.
5. Lumbar contouring of the chair should be adjusted to support the lumbar area of the back.
6. Chair (or work-surface) should be adjusted so the elbows are even with the home row level of the keyboard.
7. Wrists should be kept in a straight and neutral position. Wrists should not deviate more than 10 degrees side-to-side or 15 degrees upwards or downwards.
8. Forearm-upper arm angle should be between 90-100 degrees.
9. Arms should rest comfortably at your sides with the arms not extending more than 20 degrees away from the sides of your body and 25 degrees in front of your body.
10. Shoulders should be relaxed, not hunched or bent upwards.
11. The computer monitor should be adjusted so the top third of the screen is at eye level. Viewing distance to the screen should be about 20-28 inches.
12. The head should be in a straight and neutral position over the spine. Your ears should be in line with your shoulders and hips.