



February 3, 2010

International Repetitive Strain Injury (RSI) Awareness Day

February 28 is International RSI Awareness Day. It's already been 11 years since a group of determined workers who had experienced such injuries in the past decided to raise public awareness about repetitive strain injuries (RSIs), their causes and ways of addressing the problem.

RSIs affect the muscles in the body, as well as the tendons, nerves and joints. These injuries are very real and can cause permanent disabilities. The work we do at Canada Post exposes us to this type of injury. Unfortunately, many workers ignore that repetitive work can result in injuries. Some experience pain, but don't address the problem. Left untreated, these injuries can deteriorate and increase the risk of more serious injuries. That's why it's important to be aware of the risks associated with repetitive work.

Many factors can increase the risk of RSIs, such as not taking regular breaks, applying excessive force when doing tasks, performing a task too often or for too long, having poor posture and working in a poorly ergonomically-designed area.

Fortunately, there are things you can do to avoid repetitive strain injuries:

- Take all scheduled breaks, including the lunch break;
- Don't do the same thing over a long period;
- Make sure the rotation of duties is satisfactory and the employer implements it;
- Recognize that cold, or the handling of cold items and vibrations can increase the risk of RSIs;

- Pay specific attention to your posture in the workplace. Poor lighting, shadows and reflections could force you to alter your posture and increase the risk of RSIs.
- Avoid dehydration; drinking lots of water promotes good circulation.
- If you experience problems or pain when doing your work, consult your union representative who will ask the employer for an ergonomic evaluation of your workstation.

Under the *Canada Labour Code*, employers have an obligation to identify and assess ergonomics-related hazards and develop preventative measures and employee education. Canada Post has an obligation to implement these provisions, which are found in Part XIX of the *Canada Occupational Health and Safety Regulations*.

If you experience pain or discomfort, insist that your supervisor fill out a Supervisor Accident Investigation Report (SAIR) – don't forget that a union representative must be present during the investigation – and ask that measures be taken to resolve the problem. Consult a physician or file a claim with your provincial Workers' Compensation Board. Ask a union representative for assistance in filling out a CUPW accident investigation form.

Acting early and quickly can help prevent long-term injuries. Silence offers no protection!

In solidarity,

Serge Champoux
National Union Representative,
Health and Safety

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