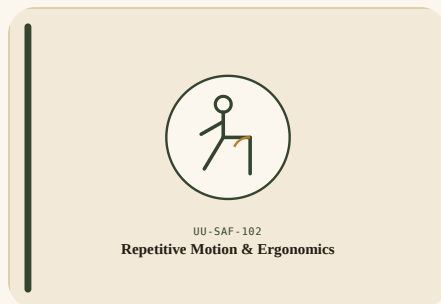


Repetitive Motion & Ergonomics at Sewing and Hand-Work Stations

The quieter injury category — reducing cumulative strain at sewing, hand-tying, and cutting stations.



1. The quiet injury category

Pneumatic tools and blades get the safety attention because the injuries are dramatic. Repetitive motion injuries — to hands, wrists, shoulders, and backs from thousands of repeated small motions at sewing machines, hand-tying stations, and cutting tables — are far more common across the industry and develop slowly enough that they're easy to under-prioritize until a worker is already hurt.

2. Sewing station setup

- Chair and table height set so wrists stay in a neutral (straight, not bent up/down) position while feeding material — a table too high or too low forces a wrist angle that compounds over thousands of stitches a day.
- Seat height and depth adjusted so feet rest flat and the knee angle is roughly neutral — a seat too high or too deep adds lower-back and leg strain across a full shift.

- Task lighting positioned to avoid awkward neck/head angles to see the work.
- Foot pedal positioned for a natural ankle angle, not reached for or angled awkwardly.

3. Hand-tying and hand-stitching stations

- Work surface height set so hand-tying (e.g. eight-way spring tying) doesn't require sustained forward bending at the waist — raise the piece to the worker rather than having the worker bend down to the piece wherever practical.
- Rotate workers between hand-tying, sewing, and cutting tasks across a shift where the shop's staffing allows it — varying the specific repetitive motion reduces cumulative strain on any one joint or muscle group far more than working one motion for an entire shift.

4. Micro-breaks and pacing

Short, frequent breaks from a repetitive task do more for injury prevention than occasional long breaks — a brief pause to stretch hands, wrists, and shoulders every hour interrupts the cumulative strain pattern in a way a single lunch break doesn't. Build this into shop culture and scheduling rather than leaving it to individual workers to remember under deadline pressure.

Watch for early signs

Numbness or tingling in hands/fingers, recurring wrist or shoulder soreness that doesn't resolve overnight, or a worker favoring one hand/side noticeably more than usual. These are early repetitive strain indicators — addressing station setup and workload at this stage is far cheaper, for the worker and the shop, than after a diagnosed injury.

5. Lifting and material handling

Frame and fully-assembled furniture handling is a back-injury risk distinct from the fine-motor repetitive strain above — team-lift or use mechanical assistance for heavy pieces rather than habitual individual lifting. See *Shop Floor Safety Basics (UU-SAF-101)* for equipment-specific controls.

Sources

General ergonomics guidance reflecting established workstation design principles for repetitive hand-work tasks. For a formal ergonomics assessment of your specific stations,

consult an occupational health professional or your workers' compensation carrier, many of which offer ergonomics consultations at low or no cost.

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