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PRESS CUTTINGS

MAY 1993

7 1995

Ergonomics for managers

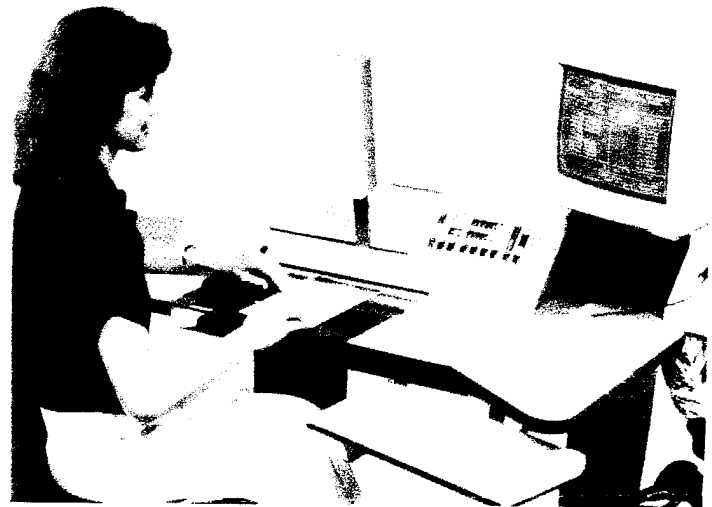
Public interest in workplace ergonomics where the use of automated IT equipment in the office is concerned is a relatively recent phenomenon says **Michael Aldrich**.

Medical complaints allegedly caused by working habits in the office environment, heart-rending human interest stories and the legal battles that followed, have all fuelled interest in ergonomics in the workplace. New medical words have become part of the common office vocabulary: tenosynovitis, carpal tunnel syndrome, tendonitis, epicondylitis. New health and safety legislation and new words such as *office ergonomics* have appeared. But what has actually changed?

There is nothing fundamentally new. Tenosynovitis was first recognised in the 19th century when clerical workers who had to create perfectly formed copperplate handwriting developed writers' cramp. Assembly-line workers in the auto industry, poultry packers, bricklayers, painters and decorators and people in most repetitive or high-speed production-line style of occupations, are prone to repetitive strain problems and/or injuries (RSI).

What is new is that the proliferation of personal computer systems in offices has brought the problems to public attention. In particular, in England between September and December 1988, 24 cases of RSI were reported amongst journalists on the *Financial Times*. In the western world nothing is more widely publicised than issues which affect people working in the media.

Within a very short time, newspapers and the courts were full of RSI cases - mainly of people working with word processors, but also including a number of data entry professionals. Public concern triggered research, analysis and government legislation. Market forces also have had a large part in turning a problem into an opportunity for better working environments, a healthier workforce and improved training. In turn, these

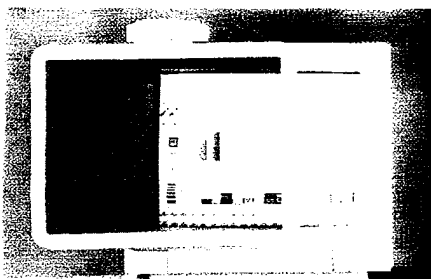


Just because the operator is comfortable does not make it legal.

provide the basis for better quality and productivity. Ergonomic issues are primarily about applied common sense. Making the equipment fit the people is more sensible than making the people fit the equipment. Recognising that the human body comes in various sizes, shapes and strengths and being prepared to accommodate diversity is a good start towards optimising people performance.

Making the environment appropriate to the work to be done is hardly new. Noise, lighting and temperature, humidity and ventilation level regulations, have long been issues in the factory. Finally, organising work to avoid fatigue, boredom and stress is a priority for management.

If you have poor performance, accidents, ill-health, high absenteeism, staff turnover and poor staff relations, you could have poor



Filter out VDU problems

The new range of Accodata VDU screen filters is designed to offer protection from low-level radiation and static. The anti-glare filter's glass has five layers of anti-reflective coating which virtually eliminates flickering and halo effects. For high resolution colour, mono or paperwhite screens, the anti-radiation filter provides up to 99 per cent protection from potentially harmful low-level non-ionising radiation and virtually eliminates the electrostatic field. Two mesh screen filters cater for low resolution monitors; an anti-glare model is suitable for mono or colour monitors or where glare is harsh.

Circle No 201 on the product card



Glass screen filters

Esselte Dymo has introduced a range of low cost glass-screen filter: an anti-static version and an anti-glare model. Fitted with a universal (non-Velcro) hanging system to give maximum adjustability, they can be used on different sizes and types of monitors including both flat and curved screens. They can also be turned around for use on an Apple Mac A4 portrait monitor. With multi-layer optical coatings on both sides and a conductive coating on the rear surface, this range gives optimum anti-glare, anti-static and anti-radiation protection.

Circle No 202 on the product card