

Forum Manufacturing, Inc., Milford Center

Intervention Key Words: Lift-tables

Industry: Manufacturing

Risk Factor(s): Repetitive motion, Awkward Posture- Back deviations, Manual Handling- Lifting/Carrying

Situation:

Forum Manufacturing, Inc. produces custom made cabinets and architectural millwork for commercial construction. Given the custom nature of the business, it has been difficult for the company to identify specific ergonomic concerns that can lead to worker injury. Two areas that have been identified as high risk are the laminating station and saw tables. Here, workers must frequently lift heavy panels of laminate weighing 50 to 120 lbs in order to feed and unload machines used in the manufacturing process. Often, these panels must also be rotated and/or flipped to be worked on. Awkward positions, repetition and a heavy load create a risk for Cumulative Trauma Disorders, resulting primarily in lower back injuries.



Worker feeds panels into saw



Workers unload roller press and stack laminated panels

Solution:

Located in Milford Center, this company has struggled with the balance of providing cost efficient, timely service and maintaining a safe work environment. Ideally, a solution to enhance productivity while increasing worker safety would be of the most benefit to the company. The solution chosen by Forum Manufacturing was to purchase mechanical lift tables. These tables assist the employee by raising the material up to the level of the work station, eliminating the need to bend over to pick it up. The only task is to slide the panels from the stack onto the machine. Lift tables were also employed on the receiving end of the laminating station. After the laminated panels are rolled, they are

stacked directly onto a pile which is now on top of a lift table. The table can be adjusted in order to “catch” the panels as they come out of the roller.

Results:

- CTD rate, Lost Days rate and Restricted Days rate were at 0 (per 200,000 hours worked) for 1 year prior to the intervention and remained at 0 for 24 months following.
- An increase in turnover rate was observed, but is not necessarily related to the intervention.
- Risk factor scores, averaged over the two workstations, decreased 41% following the intervention.