Ergonomic Issues in the USA – Today and A Perspective on Tomorrow

○ Thomas J. Albin, P.E., C.P.E. (3M)

This presentation reviews the practice of ergonomics (human factors) as a profession in the USA today as well as some of the critical issues that we face in the future. These issues are (1) creating better awareness of the benefits of ergonomic workplace design, (2) certification of ergonomists, (3) development of ergonomic technical standards, and (4) development of laws regulating workplace health and safety.

With regard to these issues, our experience teaches us that good ergonomic design can decrease errors and increase productivity. Unfortunately, we are only just beginning to communicate this to the rest of our society!

Experience also teaches us that there is a need to concentrate our knowledge into technical standards that are

accessible to new users, non-ergonomists such as process engineers and industrial designers.

Thirdly, it teaches us that, as awareness of the benefits of applying ergonomics increases and more people attempt to utilize ergonomic science, it is important to establish criteria for recognizing competent ergonomics practitioners.

Finally, poor ergonomic design is implicated as a causal factor in the development of occupational musculoskeletal disorders. As the State and National governments in the USA begin to protect workers from developing musculoskeletal disorders, ergonomists have necessarily been closely involved in developing the content of these workplace health and safety laws.

[MEMO]