

Ergonomics Regulations launched

Employers have a duty and responsibility to prevent occupational diseases and injuries relating to exposure to ergonomic hazards in their workplaces.



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This is according to the Employment and Labour Minister Thulas Nxesi at the launch of the Ergonomics Regulations at Destiny Hotel and Conference Centre, in Kempton Park, on Tuesday, 10 March 2020.

Ergonomics is the scientific discipline concerned with the fundamental understanding of interactions among humans and other elements of a system, and the profession that applies theory, data and methods to design in order to optimise human well-being and overall system performance.

The regulations focus on the processes and activities in any given company, including employers' addresses aspects of ergonomics in relation to what is happening in the company.

The regulations require the employer to implement a programme to control the exposure of employees and other people affected by their actions, to ergonomic hazards.

“The ergonomics programme is not a stand-alone programme, but rather another aspect to be incorporated into the employer’s already existing health and safety programmes. The Regulations also place duties on designers, manufacturers, importers and suppliers. This aims to eliminate, or reduce, ergonomic hazards in the early stages of designing systems and

equipment, rather than trying to find a solution once there is a final product,” the Minister said.

Department Chief Inspector Tibor Szana said most of the accidents in workplaces were caused by failure to adhere to ergonomics.

The regulations, which were promulgated in December 2019, are intended to act as a guide to all employers, employees and the public concerned with the control and prevention of exposure to ergonomic risks in the workplace.

The regulations will apply to any employer or self-employed person who carries out work at a workplace, which may expose any person to ergonomic risks in that workplace; and a designer, manufacturer, importer or supplier of machinery, plant or work systems for use at a workplace.

Nxesi said South Africa was one of the first countries in the world to introduce this kind of regulation and to champion the thinking that lies behind it.

“The South African Ergonomics Regulations have been developed in line with the Constitution of South Africa of 1996 and the Occupational Health and Safety Act,” said the Department.

“These were signed after consultation with the Advisory Council for Occupational Health and Safety, business and labour.

“With the development and promulgation of the new Regulations, South Africa has become one of the leading countries to regulate ergonomics and reduce ergonomic hazards in the workplace. We can be proud of this. These regulations are in everyone’s interests – improving working conditions as well as performance,” said Nxesi.

Department Labour Director-General Thobile Lamati said for any law to be effective it has to be enforced. Lamati said the department would be conducting advocacy sessions on the regulations with its stakeholders.

“The regulations became necessary because of challenges brought about by global changes. Regulations are designed to optimise systems in order to promote decent work agenda,” he said.

Lamati further said that the regulations were an instrument to ensure that micro and macro structural conditions do not become obstacles to the positive growth of work.

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