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Royal Mail Group - 'Stamp Out Aches and Pains' Campaign - Musculoskeletal Leaflet:

To: All Branches

Dear Colleagues,

Introduction:

As part of the Royal Mail "Stamp Out Aches and Pains Campaign" that has been subject to discussion at the Royal Mail Group Joint Health Governance Board, Dr. Corinne Parsons Royal Mail Group Occupational Health & Ergonomics Manager, has produced the attached leaflet which will be going out with the October Royal Mail Courier and in the next Parcelforce News (November edition) and the PFS magazine "In Touch" (December edition)." It is based on recognised good practice guidance and includes tips from the survey that we carried out with 1400 Royal Mail Group staff and managers about managing their musculoskeletal problems.

What are Musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs)?

The new leaflet explains that Musculoskeletal Disorders (MSDs) are problems causing aches and pains in the muscles and joints such as arthritis, slipped discs, repetitive strain injury and a wide range of other conditions. Problems may develop over a long period of time or be the result of an injury. Musculoskeletal problems affect people both at work and in their home life, reducing their participation in leisure activities, daily tasks, and disturbing sleep. Reduced physical activity can then impact on mental health as people miss out on social life and connections with people leading to feelings of loneliness. When someone experiences a MSD problem it may be related to the way they are working, lifestyle choices or things that they do at home. Many things can be done to reduce or prevent MSDs if people make healthy lifestyle choices, work safely at all times and collectively work together to identify ways to make improvements at work.

MSD Risk Factors and Causes of Aches and Pains, Sprains and Strains

Aches and pains, sprains and strains can happen suddenly or develop over the course of days, weeks or months. When a worker is exposed to causative risk factors, they are more likely to develop a sprain or strain. Musculoskeletal risk factors in the workplace are:-

- **Excessive force:** Tasks requiring high force, increases fatigue which can lead to MSD.
- **Excessive repetition:** Tasks and cycles or a highly repetitive in nature, when combined with other risks factors such high force and/or awkward postures, can contribute to MSD.
- **Awkward posture:** Awkward postures place excessive force on joints and overloads the muscles and tendons around those joints increasing MSD risks.
- **Slip, trip and fall hazards:** STF's increase risk of a sudden/acute soft tissue MSD injury.

- **Poor work practices:** Such as poor pushing, pulling, over-stretching and lifting techniques creates unnecessary stress on the body, increases fatigue and decreases the body's ability to properly recover, contributing to MSDs. Always follow Safe Systems of Work.
- **Poor rest and recovery:** MSDs develop when fatigue outruns the worker's recovery system, causing a musculoskeletal imbalance. Workers who do not get adequate rest and recovery are at higher risk.
- **Poor nutrition, fitness and hydration:** An alarming number of people are malnourished, dehydrated and at a poor level of physical fitness. Workers who do not take care of their bodies are putting themselves at a higher risk of developing musculoskeletal and chronic health problems.
- **Poor overall health habits:** Workers who smoke, drink excessively, are obese, or exhibit numerous other poor health habits are putting themselves at risk for not only musculoskeletal disorders, but also for other chronic diseases that will shorten their life and health span.
- **Recognising early signs and symptoms:** Many MSDs develop over the course of time. At the first signs of excessive fatigue/discomfort, workers need to recognise the early signs and symptoms and take appropriate preventative action. Ignoring early warning signs means it's only a matter of time until these signs and symptoms develop into a musculoskeletal disorder (MSD) injury.

REMEMBER: Prevention is better than cure!

Yours sincerely



Dave Joyce
National Health, Safety & Environment Officer