

DoD Ergonomics Working Group NEWS



Issue 12, AUGUST 2002

<http://chppm-www.apgea.army.mil/ergowg/>

NIOSH Back Belt Studies Support DoD Policy Position

DoD Position: Back Belts are Not PPE and Not for Prevention

The Department of Defense does not recognize back support belts as personal protective equipment, or the use of these devices in the prevention of back injuries.

These devices are considered medical appliances and may be prescribed by credentialed health care providers who are responsible for medical clearance, monitoring, and proper fit (DoDI 6055.1, paragraph E6.1.3).

Go to <http://chppm-www.apgea.army.mil/ergopgm/ergohome.htm>
for the complete DoDI policy reference.

NIOSH Position: Back Belts are Not Recommended to Prevent Injury

In March 2002, the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) published a summary of their findings on the use of back belts.

- In 1994, NIOSH published ***Workplace Use of Back Belts - Review and Recommendations*** and ***Back Belts - Do They Prevent Injury?*** These reports identified several issues and concerns regarding the use of back belts. They concluded that there wasn't enough evidence to recommend the use of back belts as a back injury prevention measure.
- Since then, NIOSH conducted a large epidemiologic study and two laboratory evaluations to more conclusively determine the effects of back belt use. NIOSH has concluded from the study and evaluation data:
 - Back belt use did reduce spine bending in laboratory trials.
 - Elastic support back belt use among retail material-handlers was not associated with reduced back injuries or back pain.

To view a complete copy of the NIOSH summary, go to
<http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/beltsumm.html>