

# 5 Minute

with Mark Hansen, CPE, CSP, PE, CPEA  
President, American Society of Safety Engineers (ASSE)

**ErgoSolutions Magazine:** Tell us about your background in ergonomics

**Mark Hansen:** I am a graduate of Texas A&M University with a MS degree in Industrial Engineering Specializing in Ergonomics. I earned my CPE in 1993. I am also a CSP, a licensed professional Engineer and a Certified Professional Environmental Auditor. I have over twenty years experience in the field of ergonomics, as well as, safety, health, and environmental. Specifically, I have applied ergonomics in many industrial settings: light, medium and heavy manufacturing; office environments and various field locations.



**ESM:** What role does ergonomics play in the ASSE's mission and workplace safety goals?

**Hansen:** Ergonomics is one of the many areas ASSE is concerned with due to its effect on worker safety and health. In fact, we offered numerous comments to OSHA regarding the previous standard development. We even offered a model standard in an effort to assist OSHA in their development of the standard. Presently we have been fortunate to get key ASSE members on the National Advisory Committee on Ergonomics (NACE) and we have recently formed a partnership with OSHA on ergonomics.

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Simply put, ergonomics is just like any other safety-related aspect in the workplace. We understand the issues surrounding it and we are commensurately concerned with the effect on worker safety and health.

**ESM:** What are some key ergonomic issues currently facing the ASSE and how are those being addressed?

**Hansen:** The key issue is getting our members involved as much as possible in the campaign set forth by Assistant Secretary Henshaw to raise awareness of ergonomic issues. We all understand that this Administration is not going to get a standard on ergonomics promulgated. And, if it can't be the right kind of standard, specifically, a performance-based standard that encourages cooperation between

employers, employees and even government to find workable ergonomic solutions, then we have to work with what is possible.

So, until we can get the right standard, helping get the word out on ergonomics to the extent it becomes part and parcel of everyone's thinking is a great idea. We see it as a new, necessary public health campaign.


Look at what has happened with cigarettes and drunk driving as an analogy. Legislation to help deal with those issues has been good, but what's really worked are all the ads and the groups of people who work to raise awareness and spread ideas—like the designated driver—to help people strategize how to avoid and overcome the problem. Ergonomics is no different. The issue for ASSE is to help find meaningful ways to help get the message out that ergonomics is an issue for every worker in every workplace, from factory floors to the cabs of

trucks to cubicles and desks. And to increase awareness that there are solutions, many of which, in my experience, are inexpensive and quite practical. Our 30,000 members and 150 chapters are the best possible resources to help people become aware and understand that better ergonomics will lead to better productivity and better lives.

**ESM**

*Mark Hansen is president of the American Society of Safety Engineers, and is National Director, Risk Control, Oil & Gas for The St. Paul Companies. Contact Mark at Mark.Hansen@stpaul.com.*

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