

## What's warmth got to do with it

By [Shannon Moore](#), Return-to-work consultant

Often, in various occupational settings, ergonomic education and application is focused around body mechanics, equipment used, and how to efficiently and safely complete the task at hand. Environmental factors such as lighting, standing or walking surfaces, and noise are also taken into consideration. However, temperature can be easily overlooked.

A number of studies have been conducted on how temperature of a work area impacts productivity. Studies conclude that the optimal temperature is between 70 and 73 degrees Fahrenheit. While not making an official policy on the matter, the U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration recommends having thermostats set between 68 and 76 degrees Fahrenheit but recognizes it is a matter of human comfort as well. This does not apply just to office settings but any work environment and, in fact, is possibly more important in an assembly or production



environment where dexterity is essential to perform tasks and maintain safety.

Providing additional sources of heat where possible for those working in cooler environments may be a first step to helping reduce the discomfort of the employees, but it also can increase productivity.

One study in particular investigated the relationship between hand and finger dexterity and skin temperature, among other environmental factors. This particular study found that ambient temperatures of 52 degrees Fahrenheit resulted in a 52 percent to 55 percent reduction in dexterity performance. Just think, had the temperatures remained in the optimal (or even the recommended) range, employee production may have increased two fold.

So, the next time you are conducting an assessment or meeting with a safety committee, ask the question, "Is it too cold here? Is it too warm? What might we do to ensure an optimal work environment for our employees?"

### Additional resources:

[ergonomics.about.com/od/office/a/How-Temperature-Effects-Your-Productivity.htm](http://ergonomics.about.com/od/office/a/How-Temperature-Effects-Your-Productivity.htm)

[ergoweb.com/effect-of-cold-temperatures-on-dexterity/](http://ergoweb.com/effect-of-cold-temperatures-on-dexterity/)

[osha.gov/pls/oshaweb/owadisp.show\\_document?p\\_table=INTERPRETATIONS&p\\_id=24602](http://osha.gov/pls/oshaweb/owadisp.show_document?p_table=INTERPRETATIONS&p_id=24602)

### Upcoming Ergonomics Assessor Trainings

#### Basic Ergo Assessor

June 15, 2016 | LaGrande

July 20, 2016 | Salem

September 21, 2016 | Salem

November 16, 2016 | Salem

For locations and to register online, visit [saif.com](http://saif.com)

### Online Resources

[State of Oregon Office Ergonomic Consensus Guidelines](#)

[Oregon OSHA Ergonomics Publications](#)

[OSHA.gov Computer Workstations eTool](#)

[SAIF Corporation Safety Topics](#)

### Ergo Assessor worksheet

[www.saif.com/Documents/Employer/trainings/S960\\_Ergo\\_Assessment\\_ff.pdf](http://www.saif.com/Documents/Employer/trainings/S960_Ergo_Assessment_ff.pdf)

## Recent Ergo Assessor Graduates

Congratulations to the following employees who completed their required assessments for Office Ergonomic Assessor certification.

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Katie Gillespie | BOLI

Allison Zsenyuk | OSP  
Joelle Cornthwaite | DCBS

Kathy Bruce | ODOT  
Jessica Langsford | DHS

Dixie Kraft | DHS/OHA