Standing Operating Procedure (SOP) for
Work Space Ergonomics

1. PURPOSE. The purpose of this SOP is to outline steps to maximize workstation comfort.

2. SCOPE. The checklist was developed to assist you in adjusting your workstation to obtain the optimal neutral body positions necessary to reduce potential workstation-related discomforts.

3. RESPONSIBILITIES.
   a. Natural Resource Management Supervisors: Review the checklist with Natural Resource Management Staff to ensure understanding and compliance. Ensure staff has completed the checklist.
   b. Natural Resource Management Staff: Execute checklist in accordance with the SOP.
   c. Failure to comply with this SOP may result in disciplinary action.

4. PROCEDURES. When using the checklist, all responses should be marked “Yes.” Any section indicating a “No” response should be evaluated and corrected to minimize risk. It would be advantageous to have a partner observe and assist you when referencing the optimal body position diagram (page 6) and making any workstation adjustments included in the checklist.

   1) Make chair adjustments (page 2). Reference page 7 for diagram and additional notes.
   2) Make work surface and keyboard adjustments (pages 2 & 3).
   3) Make monitor adjustments (pages 3 & 4).
   4) Rearrange workstation accessories (pages 4 & 5).
   5) Go through the section “Work Habits” (pages 5 & 6). This section will address the most difficult type of adjustments to be made.

At times, it may be necessary to improvise and/or use items typically found in an office environment to adjust the workstation. Be creative. Examples include,

   1) Placing a telephone book underneath a computer monitor will raise its height - and removing the swivel base will reduce its height.
   2) Using extra phone books or a low stool as a footrest will allow the person to have their feet flat and supported. Be careful here, as you do not want the person’s knees elevated above the hips.
3) Using a rolled-up towel as a lumbar support.
After making any workstation adjustments, the checklist should be reviewed again to ensure that
the changes made not only correct a deficiency, but also do not create another problem.

PERSONAL WORKSTATION CHECKLIST

Name: ___________________________ Date Conducted: ________________________

Chair Adjustment

Yes       No
1. Is your chair height adjustable?
   ☐       ☐

2. Does your chair support your lower back?
   ☐       ☐

3. Is there room between the front edge of the seat pan and the back of your knees?
   ☐       ☐

4. Do your feet rest flat on the floor or footrest?
   ☐       ☐

5. Are your knees bent at approximately a 90-degree angle and positioned even with or slightly lower than your hips?
   ☐       ☐

Sitting with your feet flat on the floor (or supported by a foot rest) will help support your spine. Your knees should be bent at approximately a 90-degree angle and slightly lower than your hips. Maintain adequate clearance between your knees and the front edge of the seat to keep the chair from interfering with the circulation in your legs.

If the back of your chair is adjustable, raise or lower it so that the contour of the chair provides maximum lumbar (low back) support. If possible, adjust the tilt of the backrest to support your body in an upright position. There should be a slightly larger than 90 degree angle at the hip.
Work Surface & Keyboard Adjustment

Yes       No

1. With your chair adjusted properly, is your keyboard at approximately elbow level?
   □       □
   Yes     No

2. Are your arms resting at your sides at approximately a 90-degree angle, rather than stretched out in front of you?
   □       □

3. Are your shoulders relaxed and not elevated when you work?
   □       □

4. Are your wrists in line with your forearms and not bent upward, downward, or to one side or the other?
   □       □

5. Is there clearance between the bottom of your work surface and the top of your thighs?
   □       □

Ideally, with your arms resting comfortable at your side, the home row of your keyboard (the row with the letters a,s,d,...) should be at approximately elbow level.

Adjust your chair to the proper height, then adjust the level of your work surface or keyboard tray.

If your work surface is too high and cannot be adjusted, adjust the chair to bring your elbows to the home row level of the keyboard or consider an adjustable keyboard tray.
Monitor Adjustment

Yes No
1. Is the viewing distance from your eyes to your computer monitor somewhere between 20 and 30 inches?

☐ ☐

2. Is the top of your computer screen at, or just below eye level?

☐ ☐

3. Is your computer monitor screen protected from excess glare?

☐ ☐

4. If you wear bifocals or trifocals, are you able to look at the monitor without tilting your head?

☐ ☐

Once your chair and work surface are properly adjusted, adjust your computer monitor so that the top of the screen is at or just below eye level.

There should be a slight, but not excessive backward tilt to your monitor. However, if you tilt your monitor too far back, your monitor will reflect overhead light off of the screen and into your eyes. A monitor that is tilted too far back is usually a sign that it is too low.

If you’re by a window, position your monitor at a 90-degree angle to the window to cut down on glare. Also, try to position your monitor between ceiling lights.

People who wear bifocals or trifocals often end up tilting their heads back to read through the lower portion of their glasses. This can sometimes lead to neck, shoulder and back discomfort. Purchasing glasses specifically designed for the viewing distance to your terminal screen or lowering the computer monitor can help alleviate this problem.

Workstation Accessory Arrangements

Yes No
1. Are your input devices (mouse, trackball, etc.) at the same level as your keyboard?

☐ ☐

2. Are your input devices placed in a manner that does not require excessive reaching?

☐ ☐

3. Do you have enough room on your work surface for all your computer accessories?

☐ ☐
4. Do you have an adjustable document holder to hold reference materials?  
☐ ☐

5. Are you able to keep your arms from resting on any hard or square edges on your work surface?  
☐ ☐

Rectangular work surfaces often don’t allow enough space for computers and related accessories. Keyboard trays or similar devices are one option to increase desk space. However, these devices can sometimes force you too far away from your primary work surface, forcing you to reach for your mouse or other accessories or to put your mouse at a higher level than the keyboard, which may cause pain or discomfort to arms and shoulders. If your work surface is too high, and cannot be adjusted an adjustable keyboard tray can help you maintain proper wrist angle (see “Work Surface & Keyboard Adjustment” section for more information).

As you change tasks, remember to move primary materials/input devices in front of you. If you must frequently look at reference materials as you type, you should consider using a document holder to help you keep your head aligned over your spine and prevent or relieve neck, shoulder and back discomfort. If using a document holder, position it at the same height and distance as your monitor.

A padded wrist rest can help you keep your wrists in a straight and neutral position. Ideally, the wrist rest should be made of firm foam and constructed so that the pad height matches the front toe height of your keyboard.

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Work Habits

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Do you stand and take short and frequent breaks throughout the day to reduce fatigue?</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Do you build variety into your day to break-up prolonged tasks?</td>
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<td>3. Do you frequently change body positions while working?</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Do you provide your eyes with vision breaks every hour?</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Do you avoid resting your wrists while key-stroking?</td>
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6. Is your wrist neutral and pinch force grip avoided while mousing?

☐ ☐

7. Do you use your arm muscles, not your wrist to move your mouse?

☐ ☐

8. When key-stroking, are your hands relaxed, do you use a light touch?

☐ ☐

9. Are you free of pain and/or discomfort while working?

☐ ☐

10. Do you avoid cradling your phone receiver between your ear and shoulder?

☐ ☐

Periodic breaks should help alleviate fatigue and strain to your eyes and upper body. Taking a break does not mean that you have to stop working. Rather, it allows you to integrate other activities such as making phone calls or making copies.

Changing positions periodically helps maintain circulation and prevents putting pressure on any one area of the body for an extended period of time.

Vision breaks can be accomplished by focusing on an object at least 20 feet away. You can also close your eyes and cover them with your palms for 30-60 seconds. Blink your eyes often and take a break by alternating tasks when necessary.

When mousing, keep your wrist neutral and off of the work surface or mouse pad and relax your grip. To avoid wrist strain, use the larger muscles of your arm to manipulate the mouse instead of your wrist.

When key-stroking, float your wrists, relax your hand and use a light touch on the keys.

Pay attention to how your body responds to pain. Pain that is continuous and doesn’t go away overnight may indicate a more serious problem. If you experience pain or discomfort while working tell your supervisor. It is much easier to treat a problem in its early stages.

Talking on the phone with the receiver cradled between your ear and your shoulder can cause neck, shoulder and back pain.
Adjusting Your Workstation

- Adjust lumbar support by moving the back rest up or down to match the inward curve of your spine. If your chair is not adjustable, a rolled up towel or a lumbar support cushion is recommended.
- Adjust the tilt of the back-rest and/or seat pan to keep your body supported in an upright, slightly forward or reclined position.
- Adjust the seat height for adequate leg clearance under the workstation and keep the keyboard at approximately elbow level.
- Keep feet flat on the floor or supported by a footrest.
- Adjust your monitor so that the top of the screen is at or just below eye level.

Adjusting Your Body Posture

- Keep your head in line with your shoulders and hips.
- Keep elbows close to your body.
- Place items used most often within 16 inches of your body.
- Keep wrists in a neutral position.
- Keep fingers in a relaxed position when working. Avoid extreme finger extensions.
- Use a light touch when pressing keys.

Monitor at proper level.

Elbows, at approximately 90°.

Wrist neutral.

Lumbar support.

Knees, even with hips.

Space between front of seat pan and knees.

Feet flat and supported.