

What Does Task Analysis Have to Do with Me?

This OSACH Fast Fact is intended to help JHSC members, other workers, supervisors and managers understand the role of task analysis in health care organizations, and consider how they can help to implement task analysis in their own organization.

Task analysis is a systematic procedure to identify the demands of a particular job. It breaks the job into major tasks. Then, it analyzes the physical, sensory/perceptual and environmental demands, interactions with equipment and administrative practices related to each task.

What Helps in Task Analysis?

Task analysis should be as objective as possible. The use of measurements (e.g., distances, length of time and frequency of task) helps make task analysis valid and reliable.

How Does Task Analysis Benefit Workers and Management?

Task analysis identifies hazards and undesirable features of a job that may lead to injury and illness if they are not changed.

Job Design

Task analysis should be considered at the design stage or when new procedures or equipment are being introduced. Identifying demands and appropriate controls at the design stage can help avoid expensive alterations later on.

For example, analyzing the tasks associated with a new piece of equipment may reveal that housekeepers will not be able to clean under a bed, or that office staff will be in an awkward position when keying information. Similarly, a proposed new job or procedure may demand manual lifting and reaching that will lead to a back injury in a few months. Task analysis can identify these demands.

Preplacement Assessment

Task analysis provides detailed information to prospective employees about the demands of the job they are applying for, or have been offered.

Orientation

Task analysis can provide valuable training tools to properly orient workers on the demands of the job. For example, if the task analysis identifies manual handling of objects as an essential duty of the job, orientation should include training in proper lifting techniques and back care.

Return to Work and Modified Work

Task analysis is essential for assessing whether recovering workers are able to do their previous jobs or modified ones. A worker's physician and/or the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) can use a task analysis to determine whether the demands of a particular job are reasonable for the worker's current condition.

Job Satisfaction

When workers are appropriately skilled, oriented and trained to perform jobs designed with the workers in mind, a win-win situation is created — the satisfied workers are likely to perform better and the employer has happier workers who enjoy their work and do it well.

Who Does Task Analysis?

Task analysis may be the responsibility of one person, such as the occupational health nurse or a physiotherapist or occupational therapist, or it may be assigned to each department head. Effective task analysis, however, involves a team approach. For example, two people may be needed to measure distances or count activities and record them accurately. To produce accurate and reliable information, the worker should be actively involved in the task analysis. Also, it is preferable to observe each task several times and with different workers performing the work to get an accurate picture of the actual conditions.

What Can the JHSC Do?

- Involve workers in the process.
- Identify and prioritize jobs for task analysis.
- Review task analysis checklists and choose the most suitable one to be used consistently throughout the organization.
- Ensure that those doing the task analyses receive appropriate training.
- Suggest the following process:
 - > List all major tasks of the job.
 - > Observe and analyze each task separately.
 - > Be objective — measure.
- Clarify information with the workers. Ask questions.
- Review the draft task analysis with the workers who do that job. Welcome their input.
- Finalize the task analysis.
- Make recommendations on any issues arising from the task analysis.
- Maintain a copy of the completed task analysis in the department, human resources and occupational health.
- Integrate task analysis with standard operating procedures.

You will find it much easier to comply with the many provisions of the Health Care Facilities Regulation of Ontario's Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA) if you already have task analyses on the jobs in your organization.



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LAP-168 • Rev. 03/06