



What makes a chair “Ergonomic?”

A chair can have all the bells and whistles and not be ergonomically designed for a specific person. A chair may be fully adjustable but not fit a particular person. So what does “ergonomic” mean?

A chair is ergonomically designed FOR YOU if it can be adjusted to support safe and healthy work postures and be used safely within your work environment.

All of the chairs under the LANL furniture contract meet and/or exceed ANSI/BIFMA standards for seating. Range of adjustability, cushion integrity, stability, flame retardation, are examples of some of the aspects of seating covered by the American National Standards Institute. In addition, all LANL chairs carry a warranty.

Here are some of the “lessons learned” we have seen associated with seating and ergonomics at LANL:

Take time to learn how to adjust your chair. A chair is delivered and often the user never takes time to learn how to adjust the chair. If your chair is delivered without instructions, you may contact the vendor for instructions or go to the chair manufacturer’s website for instructions. Your chair should be adjusted to accommodate different tasks and postures, as well as shoes and clothing that you wear.

Report chairs that are broken ASAP! All LANL chairs are/were under warranty. The time of warranty is a minimum of five years for most chairs and greater for some. If your chair cannot be fixed, **STOP** using it. Report the broken chair to your safety and health representative. Contact ergonomics@lanl.gov if you are not able to get assistance with respect to a broken or unsafe chair from within your organization.

Use a chair that fits you and does not impede your work. This seems simple, but if your chair is too small or too large it can decrease circulation to working muscles. In addition, postural support is compromised when your chair does not fit you. You may

consult the chair checklist at

http://int.lanl.gov/safety/ergonomics/docs/chair_checklist2.pdf for help on adjusting your chair for best fit. If the arms of your chair do not allow you to come close enough to your work area, consider removing them. Contact your Facility Manager for assistance with this task.

Your Work Chair is LANL Property: Be gentle with your chair and respect its limits.

- Your chair is used for seated postures. It is not a recliner. It is not a couch. It is not a wheelchair. If you are tired, change your work postures by varying your tasks (i.e., stand up when you make telephone calls). Reclining your chair and elevating your feet on your desk is not an intended use of the chair. This type of posture may put you at risk for tipping backwards.
- When reaching for objects, especially behind you, take time to stand versus wheeling your chair across the room and using awkward reaches. This often happens when a person has to retrieve printed objects from a printer or copier.
- Falling or “plopping” into your chair can be dangerous because most chairs are on wheels. Take time to sit gently into your chair. If you are unable to sit or stand due to weakness in any part of your body, consider raising your chair as you get out of your seat and then lowering it when you sit in it. This will raise the seat height of the seat to reduce your need to bend your knees when sitting down.
- Most chairs will accommodate up to 250 pounds in weight. If you weigh more than 250 pounds, consider purchasing a “big and tall” chair. These chairs have reinforced steel and heavy-duty cylinders.
- Avoid leaning on one side of the chair for support. This puts pressure on your body and results in awkward postures. The back of the chair should fully support the upright-seated weight of your body.

If you have questions about your chair that are not answered here, please contact the LANL Project Leader for Ergonomics at gperez@lanl.gov.