

Personal Protective Equipment

Driving the Importance of Support in the Automotive Industry

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For most people, motor vehicles are an important part of daily life. Whether we have to commute to work, chauffeur the kids around, or simply get from point A to B, we depend on our cars. According to the *Bureau of Labor Statistics*, "in 2010, on an average day, 67.6% of the civilian non-institutional population aged 15 and over drove; those who drove spent, on average, 1 hour and 18 minutes driving."

Not only are people spending more time in their cars, but the increasing usage of cars throughout the country is excellent news for the automobile industry. Since mid-2009, employment has increased with a boom in motor vehicle part manufacturing. This includes building parts for electrical equipment, engines, transmissions, seating and interior trims, air conditioners, brake systems, and more. However, while business booms, it's important to look at the automobile manufacturing environment.

According to the *Bureau of Labor Statistics*, within the United States in 2010, injury cases in the motor vehicle parts manufacturing industry occurred at a rate of 4.8 per 100 full-time workers. This alarmingly high statistic is due to the hazardous workplace conditions. Automobile workers are susceptible to much higher rates of illness and injury than other industries because they consistently spend time around heat, noise, and fumes, and work on hard and unforgiving surfaces. Not only are these employees working in difficult conditions, but they often have very physically demanding jobs that require repetitive and consistent movement throughout the day. In addition, these workers are using grease and oil, which often results in slips, trips and falls.

Automobile workers are vulnerable to injury and illness in their workplace because their daily activities are surrounded by workplace hazards such as loud noise, chemicals and poor ergonomic conditions. Many workers are expected to do repetitive motions throughout the day on hard or wet surfaces, leaving them prone to slips, trips and falls, in addition to musculoskeletal disorders.

Slips, trips and falls account for 20% of all injuries in the *motor vehicle repair industry*. Not only do these workers need protection from these dangerous incidents, but they require protection from sharp objects and extreme temperatures.

Many automobile manufacturing plants try to reduce foot, knee and back pain by installing floor matting. However, the floor matting can also cause issues, since wear and tear in matting may lead to slips and trips, and matting does not cover 100% of the surface area of the workplace. This *Manufacturing.net* article on Ergonomics in Manufacturing Plants talks about matting and suggests, "To reduce matting tripping hazards, try replacing floor matting with insoles instead. Not only do they provide full workplace coverage, but they do not require costly maintenance and replacement." Automobile manufacturing and repair facilities that cannot utilize anti-fatigue matting, do not want the hassle of maintaining costly matting, or want to improve their worker's shock absorption and comfort throughout the day, immediately benefit from the easy and affordable implementation of anti-fatigue insoles.

In this article from *Occupational Health and Safety Magazine*, Dr. Kevan Orvitz says "Providing workers with dual-layer, anti-fatigue memory foam insoles not only provides tremendous comfort for all-day standing, but also reduces the risk of foot disorders, pain and strains. As a bonus, look for insoles that have shock absorption. Anti-fatigue insoles that provide shock absorption allow energy to be absorbed

by the insole when something strikes the foot, which decreases the energy that would otherwise be absorbed by the joints and soft tissue. Providing workers with personal anti-fatigue insoles reduces pain, fatigue and health care costs while increasing productivity and employee engagement." Go for insoles that are clinically designed to reduce pain and fatigue.

Providing automobile workers with constant support and comfort not only reduces slips, trips and falls, but it lowers medical claims by preventing musculoskeletal disorders.

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