

## **Discontinued use of fitness ball chair**

WisDOT is complying with a Department of Administration's (DOA) recommendation to discontinue the use of a fitness ball as an office chair. The general guidance indicates, "While the fitness ball is an excellent tool for strengthening and toning in the home and gym, prolonged office use can also cause significant unintended musculoskeletal problems. Extended use of the ball chair will shorten muscles and place increased compressive force on the spine. Excessive force on the discs of the spine over an extended period of time could cause significant damage to the spine and permanent back injury."

Bureau of Human Resource Services (BHRS), in partnership with Risk and Safety, continue to support DOA's guidance to discontinue the use of an exercise ball chair, even as an accommodation. Under ADA, WisDOT engages in an ongoing interactive discussion to determine an effective accommodation for both the employee and the agency. If an accommodation is no longer successful, or in this case a policy change, then an acceptable alternative must be offered. At this time, successful alternatives include a sit/stand work station or an ergonomically correct chair with lumbar support. However, other options may be considered.

WisDOT's Ergonomic Program actively works to address the discomfort and physical symptoms that employees may experience while at their workstations. Ergonomic concerns are not necessarily disabilities. A simple workstation adjustment or purchase of ergonomic equipment may assist an employee. Contact your area's ergonomic specialist for assistance.

In the event that a simple ergonomic adjustment is not successful, employees have a right to request a reasonable job accommodation per HR Policy 126. WisDOT works to assure equal access to employment for all individuals by consistently providing reasonable job accommodations for staff. The department follows the provisions of the American with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) and the Wisconsin Fair Employment Act (WFEA) when handling issues related to reasonable accommodations.

Both programs work together to minimize risk for both the employee and the department.

Process:

1. If an employee requests the use of a ball chair as an accommodation, the request will be denied.
2. An ergonomic specialist or coordinator should be contacted to conduct a thorough onsite workstation assessment to identify risks factors. They will provide recommendations to ensure proper posture and proper workstation setup. They can also recommend potential alternatives, either a proper ergonomic chair with lumbar support or sit/stand workstation or both.
3. If applicable, have employees complete form DT1120 – Employee Request for an Accommodation.

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