

Occupational overuse syndrome

This chapter provides guidance in relation to Occupational Overuse Syndrome (OOS), also known as Repetitive Strain Injury (RSI), and is primarily based on guidance issued by WorkSafe New Zealand.





Section 5

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Who needs to read this?

Anyone involved in tasks that could lead to OOS (such as repetition), as well as those responsible for engaging staff to perform repetitive tasks on a production.

Roles that have direct influence over other workers should also read the 'planning and guidance considerations' section; this includes production company representatives, producers, directors, production managers, heads of departments, assistant directors, health and safety officers and location managers.

Definitions

OOS (Occupational Overuse Syndrome) or **RSI (Repetitive Strain Injury)** are terms used to describe a variety of conditions, including injury from discomfort. In accordance with WorkSafe New Zealand's definition, OOS is characterised by discomfort or persistent pain in muscles, tendons and other soft tissues.

Symptoms

OOS is different to the type of pain associated with muscle pain and soreness after exercise, activity the body is not accustomed to, or other conditions such as arthritis.

Early symptoms of OOS may include:

- muscle discomfort
- fatigue
- aches and pains
- soreness
- hot and cold feelings
- muscle tightness
- numbness and tingling
- stiffness
- muscle weakness

Causes

OOS often occurs over time, and is normally caused or aggravated by specific types of work. The condition can also be created or made worse by activities away from the workplace.

Work that may result in OOS often involves repetitive movement, sustained or constrained postures, and/or forceful movements. It may also be provoked by other factors such as stress and working conditions. While some conditions of OOS are well understood medically, many are not and the cause of them is yet to be determined.



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Prevention

Ensuring workers are provided a variety of tasks and regular rest breaks are believed to be the best preventative measures for OOS, as the absence of these is thought to strain muscle and tendons beyond their ability for short-term recovery.

High risk roles

Some roles or tasks in the screen industry affected by OOS include:

- cleaners (studio and office cleaners)
- machinists (grips/riggers/set construction/camera department/art department)
- kitchen workers (craft service)
- typists (producers, assistants, production office)
- painters (set painters)
- hairdressers (hair and makeup)
- carpenters
- operators (camera, camera crane)

Minimum responsibilities

Everyone involved in a screen production who undertakes tasks that could put them at risk of OOS should read and understand this section.

All workers should:

- read the above sections on definitions, symptoms, causes and prevention;
- understand the risk associated with activities that can lead to OOS; and
- inform their head of department if their workspace set up is not adequate.

The best way to avoid the consequences of OOS is through prevention rather than cure.



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Planning and guidance considerations and responsibilities

Everyone who has responsibilities, or influence over, an activity or task that may result in OOS should read and understand this section, as well as the minimum responsibilities for everybody.

Prevention

The best way to avoid the consequences of OOS is through prevention rather than cure.

Preventing OOS can be addressed through:

- design of equipment and tasks;
- organisation of work;
- work environment;
- training and education; and/or
- development of policies.

Roles and responsibilities

Funders

Funders should:

- be assured, through the provision of the production's health and safety plan, that the funding provided is adequate for the proposed length of the production process; and
- incorporate health and safety clause/s in the funding agreement.

Production company

In pre-production, production companies (likely to have primary responsibility over health and safety on the production) should:

- ensure necessary planning is done to minimise risk of OOS occurring; and
- ensure senior staff hired are aware of OOS prevention.

Producer / production manager

In pre-production, the producer / production manager should ensure:

- adequate design of workstations and equipment;
- each person's workstation is appropriately setup to minimise the risk of OOS;
- the number of people hired is in relation to the size of the project;
- there is enough variety of tasks in the organisation of work;
- enough people are hired to allow everyone appropriate rest breaks;
- staff are aware of ways to prevent OOS and provide any training or education on this where required; and
- sufficient resources, including budget, are allocated to enable appropriate and safe environments and working practices.





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Director / Heads of Department

The director and all heads of department should:

- be aware of the risk of OOS to their respective teams; and
- take steps to provide adequate workspaces, appropriate rest breaks and a variety of tasks where possible to minimise the risk of OOS developing.

Health and safety officer

The health and safety officer should:

- work with the producer, production manager and heads of department to help them assess workspaces that may present a risk for OOS; and
- ensure the potential for any OOS arising is discussed with cast and crew during health and safety inductions and / or as required if circumstances change.

Training

- Workers should be made aware of OOS during their health and safety induction.



References

The following were used as reference in the research and development of these guidelines:

NZ Technician's Guild Safety Code of Practice (SCOP)

[http://screensafe.co.nz/pdf/Technical Guidelines for ScreenSafe.pdf](http://screensafe.co.nz/pdf/Technical%20Guidelines%20for%20ScreenSafe.pdf)

WorkSafe OOS Prevention Guide:

<http://www.worksafe.govt.nz/worksafe/information-guidance/all-guidance-items/occupational-overuse-syndrome-oos-guidelines-for-prevention-and-management/oos-prevention-guide.pdf>



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