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## Opinion: Life Beyond the OSHA Ergonomics Standard

by Carol Stuart-Buttle, Chair  
Outreach Advisory  
Committee

OSHA's Ergonomics Program Standard is dead. The resolution to revoke it was passed by both the House and Senate, and now the president has signed the legislation into effect under the Congressional Review Act. For many human factors/ergonomics professionals, this news was a huge disappointment. Feelings were mixed among others; though they supported an ergonomics standard, they had reservations about the details of the final version. Some in the field are relieved that the standard has been revoked. I think all would agree that many HF/E people have put in years of work in the name of ergonomics.

Perhaps a federal ergonomics standard is not a closed issue. There is bipartisan discussion to draw up a bill to charge OSHA to try again; many close to the political scene are skeptical that such a bill will have support. Articles in trade magazines remind us that OSHA is alive and kicking with the General Duty Clause, for which there are now two precedent-setting legal cases to give it strength (Pepperidge Farms and Beverly Enterprises). In addition, the ANSI Z365 Committee has a draft standard entitled *Management of Work-Related Musculoskeletal Disorders*, which appears close to completion and may assume greater importance now that there is no federal rule. At least two states (California and Washington) have state ergonomics standards. So, in light of this evidence, companies may be taking a "business as usual" attitude toward compliance in making workplaces safe and healthy.

But do we want business as usual? Do we really wish for the past, when the primary focus was reactive, when the true value of ergonomics was underappreciated? We have an opportunity like never before to instill ergonomics where it has the biggest effect and from which there is the greatest return on investment – up-front design.

Why am I so optimistic? I believe OSHA has provided a great service to our profession by making *ergonomics* a household word. Some may feel that the profession has been besmirched by the publicity, but I see no evidence of that; rather, an attitude of dismissal that the fracas was all politics. Certainly, industries that already embrace ergonomics plan to continue to reap the benefits, and the word is getting around. Industry is interested in ergonomics because companies have

problems – it's not just a matter of compliance to a rule. Of course, there are "bad apples" who provoke legislation, but my focus is not on the pros and cons of a standard but on the opportunity our profession has to help raise the standard of working life through good design.

In the present climate of a post-federal ergonomics standard, there are several specific opportunities of which we can and should take advantage.

Although ergonomics is now a household word, it is commonly misunderstood. The OSHA focus has equated ergonomics with cumulative trauma disorders and limited a systems-oriented approach, without which there is only partial success. This provides our first important opportunity: namely, to revise the popular understanding of ergonomics from being merely sore wrists to incorporating design for ease of use and effective performance. This path is already being paved by the publicity on popular issues such as patient safety and ballot design, with which our profession is greatly involved.

A second opportunity is to continue demonstrating that good ergonomics is good economics. The primary criticism of the Ergonomics Program Standard was its high cost of compliance. In recent years, representatives from industries that follow ergonomics processes and incorporate ergonomics into their product designs have publicly admitted that they are quiet about their advocacy because it gives them a competitive edge by enhancing productivity and improving the quality of their products.

Aging is another reason that there will be continued demand for our professional expertise and therefore a promotional oppor-

(continued on page 5)

## Executive Council Midyear Meeting

The 2001 Midyear Meeting of the HFES Executive Council will be held May 3–5 in Santa Monica, California. Members who are not part of the Executive Council and are interested in attending should contact HFES Executive Director Lynn Strother at 310/394-1811, fax 310/394-2410, [lynn@hfes.org](mailto:lynn@hfes.org).



## Outreach You Can Do

by *Lois Smith*  
*HFES Communications Director*

Recent news coverage of the Florida ballot mishap and congressional action to overturn the OSHA Ergonomics Program Standard have presented excellent opportunities for HFES members to remind the public, lawmakers, and companies that human factors/ergonomics can make a difference. Articles on these and other issues related to HF/E give members a chance to help ensure that the media continue to expand their awareness of this discipline. When you see an article on a topic that merited an HF/E “angle” but in which that perspective went unrepresented, use the occasion to educate editorial staffs and readers through a letter to the editor or an op/ed column.

Well-written and credible opinion pieces and letters to the editor about the value and contributions of HF/E (no matter what your specialty may be) can carry the message effectively in local and national newspapers and magazines. For example, member Najmedin Meshkati has been very successful in publishing letters and op/ed pieces in a number of national papers. Of course, there is no guarantee that your submissions will be published, but the following tips from public relations professionals affiliated with trade and scientific associations may improve your chances.

### Op/Ed Pieces

The op/ed page is usually found facing the editorial page of the newspaper. The op/ed piece is brief – 700–800 words – and states an opinion on an issue of public concern in concise, persuasive language. One PR professional recommends that an op/ed submission contain these elements:

- A “grabber” – ideally in the first sentence but certainly in the first paragraph, referring to a recent event, person, or issue in

an attention-grabbing manner. Humor and drama are effective ways to grab the editor’s attention.

- The point – a concise statement of your position.
- The chain of evidence – succinctly stated details and facts that support your point.
- A summation – in a short paragraph, a reiteration of the point and why it’s important.
- Bonus – the “good-bye zinger,” a restatement of the “grabber” in which the event, person, or issue is framed in a humorous or dramatic way that leaves a lasting impression on readers.

### Letters to the Editor

These guidelines may help you get a letter published:

- When rebutting news items or editorials, send your response as soon as possible after they are published – the same day is the best timing.
- If the guidelines for writing a letter are not listed in the publication, call to get details about length, deadlines, and delivery method.
- Keep your letter simple and to the point.
- Avoid jargon, but if you must use technical terms, define them very briefly.
- Avoid the impression that you’re promoting yourself, an organization, or an event. (But don’t hesitate to promote the HF/E field!)
- Make it clear why your letter addresses the interests of the publication’s readership, even if the topic is controversial.
- Give your credentials if necessary to establish credibility to back up your claims or facts.
- Hand-deliver the letter to local news offices.

### Opportunities Abound

Almost every magazine published has a letters department, and magazines are everywhere – in doctors’ offices, on airlines, on the Web. Articles on a wide variety of topics may contain the seeds of an HF/E issue, even if this is not immediately apparent to you. Think about ways you can inform the publication’s readers about the value of this field, and try your hand at getting published. If you succeed, be sure to send a copy of the published piece to the HFES Communications Department. Your efforts will bolster the Society’s outreach activities.

*HFES thanks association PR pros Jeffrey D. Porro (op/ed writing tips), Larry Hoffer, Jim Baron, Elizabeth Weintraub, Shelley Borysiewicz, and Chris Bonner for input on this article.*

## “Quick Tips” Booklet Completed

HFES members Karen Young and Ronald G. Shapiro have prepared a new publication, “Quick Tips for Finding a Human Factors/Ergonomics Job in Industry.” This 8-page booklet covers three essential elements for success in a career search: educational achievements, internship experience, and networking.

# Bulletin

Volume 44, Number 4 April 2001

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Additional sections address tips on effective résumé-writing, interviewing, getting ahead in the first year on the job, and taking advantage of HFES resources for job seekers.

Contact the central office (310/394-1811, info@hfes.org) to obtain a copy of the new booklet.

## Placement Service Adds New Features!

At the end of March, the HFES Placement Service was upgraded to a more advanced career center technology platform. Since its launch at the HFES Annual Meeting in Chicago in 1998, the on-line Placement Service has grown and now contains more than 100 jobs and 1600 candidates. It is the only service of its kind that caters exclusively to human factors/ergonomics positions and professionals.

The upgraded career center incorporates many new, easy-to-use features for both employers and job seekers. HFES members Bill Moroney, Scott Schoeling, and Mike Goliber of the University of Dayton gave generously of their time and expertise in recommending changes in the new improved service.

### New Features for Employers

Employers register on-line only once in order to create a private account for job posting and résumé search and may post jobs immediately. The job details include the company's logo and profile, a link to the company's Web site, and a link to all the companies' job listings for easy management. Each job listing can include desired skills weighted by level of proficiency and years of experience. Candidates, in turn, may list specific skills; when there is a match, the employer is notified. Finally, whenever new résumés are posted with criteria that match the employer's requirements, the employer is notified by e-mail.

### New Features for Job Seekers

In addition to a flexible search engine that offers both keyword and advanced searching, an electronic search agent can e-mail candidates daily with job listings that match their criteria. Rather than having to standardize a résumé, candidates can upload multiple documents of any kind, including Word documents, PowerPoint images, video files, or photos.

### New Features for the Annual Meeting

Employers and job seekers can now use the on-line service to indicate whether they will be available for interviews at the Annual Meeting. Take advantage of the opportunity to meet face to face at the HFES 45th Annual Meeting in Minneapolis, October 8-12.

For more information and to register, log on to the new Placement Service at <http://hfes.org>. ☒

## Human Factors: The Six-Month Mark...

by Eduardo Salas, Editor

It's hard to believe that the new editorial team has been at the *Human Factors* helm for six months now. Time flies when you're having fun (at least, so far, I am!). From time to time, I'll use this forum – *the HFES Bulletin* – to communicate with readers about policies, problems, solutions, issues, changes, observations, requests, trends, and thoughts about the journal's functioning. So here go my initial thoughts at the six-month mark.

First, the transition from Bill Howell's editorship to our team was seamless. Thanks to Bill, Communications Associate Ellen Murphy, and Communications Director Lois Smith, we inherited a well-functioning machine. I am amazed at how the central office staff processes the hundreds of manuscripts, letters, e-mails, and reviews with such efficiency and professionalism. We owe them big thanks. It has made our job easy (and fun).

Second, although things are working fine, there seems to be room for improvement. And we will make small needed improvements to our system as we go along (more on this in future articles). But one concern I have now – for which I need your help – is in reviewing. The quality of the journal depends in large part on the participation of qualified reviewers and on the comments, suggestions, and questions raised in reviews. This is an invaluable process that takes time and commitment. And here lies the concern. The assignment of reviewers is taking longer than we want, largely because of the time constraints (i.e., busy schedules, other commitments) that we all have. Therefore, finding two or three reviewers per article is time consuming.

One potential solution is to increase our pool of reviewers, and in the last issue of the *Bulletin*, we published a call for help. We need more reviewers who are willing to do timely, fair, and thorough reviews; expertise in all topics is needed. If you are interested, please send an e-mail to Communications Associate Ellen Murphy (ellen@hfes.org). This is an opportunity for more of you to get involved with the journal.

Third, as you will see, there is a "new" Editorial Board. We have tried to include some new faces, some old faces, and some international colleagues (we need more). We have also ensured representation from all the HFES Technical Groups and some of those who apply human factors. We will be adding more as we go along and dropping those who do not perform. The best way to get onto the Board is to voluntarily participate and produce timely and thorough reviews.

Fourth, a word on special sections. We just launched one special section (see last month's *Bulletin*) and have received several proposals but would like to do more. If you have an interesting topic to propose, please ask Ellen Murphy to send you the guidelines for assembling a special section.

Finally, keep sending us your best work. So, this is it for now... until next time. ☒

## Europe Chapter Exchange Program

*Please note the following item, which appeared in the March 2001 issue (p. 3) with incomplete information. Below is the corrected notice.*

The Europe Chapter has established a program designed to stimulate exchange between its members and human factors professionals in the United States. The program will enable chapter members to visit the United States for a limited time to support research, thesis projects, and internships, and for students in the United States to visit participating universities and organizations in Europe.

To achieve these goals, corporate or governmental sponsorship is of vital importance. The chapter is proud to announce that VRC Corporation has donated \$10,000 to the program.

The chapter is still defining the first year of the exchange; however, it is expected that several students and chapter members will be able to participate during 2001. Half of the grant will be used for exchange between the United States and Europe; students can expect a financial contribution of \$1,000. The remaining funds will support selected individual projects and outreach activities to our Eastern European colleagues.

If you are interested in participating in the program or in making a donation, contact Dick de Waard, secretary of the HFES Europe Chapter, at [d.de.waard@ision.nl](mailto:d.de.waard@ision.nl). For more information about the HFES Europe Chapter, visit <http://www.ision.nl/users/hfesec/>. ☒

## STUDENT NEWS

## Call for Student Award Applications

by D. Kristen Gilbert  
Student Affairs Chair

The Student Affairs Committee is pleased to have an opportunity for the third consecutive year to recognize and publicize the accomplishments of our students. The student members of HFES are a tremendous asset to the Society. We are fortunate to have such talented, upcoming professionals as colleagues.

In order to apply for these awards, students and/or chapters must send a completed application and supporting materials to the address listed at the end of this article.

### Student Member with Honors

The purpose of this designation is to honor students who have made an outstanding contribution to the discipline or to HFES during their tenure as a student. Students may apply for this designation when they apply for membership in HFES, or they may send an application when they have met the following eligibility requirements:

- Class standing of junior or senior for an undergraduate or any graduate student
- GPA of 3.75 or its equivalent for graduate students (as evidenced by a transcript)
- GPA of 3.50 or its equivalent for undergraduate students (as evidenced by a transcript)
- Student membership in HFES, or application pending
- Successful completion of at least one human factors-related course with a grade of A or its equivalent (as evidenced by a transcript or letter from the instructor)
- Two letters of recommendation, at least one of which must be from a full member of HFES
- At least two of the following:
  - (1) A human factors-related presentation at a regional or national

- meeting (provide photocopy from program or letter from adviser)
- (2) Evidence of design contribution (e.g., award, patent, letter from supervisor)
- (3) Publication of human factors work in an approved journal (e.g., *Human Factors*, *Ergonomics in Design*, *Applied Ergonomics*, or any other journal approved by the awards committee)
- (4) Significant service to HFES at the national or local chapter level (provide letter from committee chair or officer of the group)

### Outstanding Student Chapter Awards

The purpose of this award is to honor student chapters that have made an outstanding contribution to the discipline, HFES, their campus, or their community in a particular year. Up to three student chapters may be honored each year.

Examples of outstanding contributions include:

- Significant increase in percentage of membership in the student chapter or numerous chapter activities such as colloquia and field trips.
- Service to the community, such as sponsoring a design competition at a local high school or involvement in a career day
- Participating in a design competition, developing a product, or conducting a research project
- Service to HFES at the national or local chapter level
- Notable electronic presence (e.g., innovative use of a Web site)

In order to apply for these awards, chapters must provide supporting materials, including letters of recommendation, a written description of the activities of the student chapter, and other materials that will support the application, such as brochures, announcements, and videos.

For further information or to request an application for Student Member with Honors and/or Outstanding Student Chapter, contact Kristen Gilbert, University of Montevallo, Station 6440, Montevallo, AL 35115; 205/665-6445; [gilbertk@montevallo.edu](mailto:gilbertk@montevallo.edu). The deadline for each is *May 15, 2001*. ☒

## Opinion: Life Beyond the OSHA Ergonomics Standard

(continued from page 1)

tunity. The workforce is aging, and that means new challenges in keeping people healthy. Recently, I received a request to assist a manufacturing facility with controlling injuries in a workforce with 83% over the age of 40 and 56% with more than 20 years of service with the company. The request was driven by concern to keep the workforce effective and cost-effective; compliance was the last thing on managers' minds.

In addition, a labor-related area of opportunity for our field concerns unemployment, which has been at a record low, with a limited pool from which to hire. Employee retention has become a great concern across all industries. The human factors/ergonomics profession has contributed to a body of knowledge pertaining to the relationship between conditions in the work environment and job satisfaction. Industry employers are beginning to pay attention to the quality of working life, as evidenced by a newspaper article about the increasing rarity of pharmacists and the efforts of drugstores to retain them.

Identifying opportunities for outreach is an important activity of HFES. Outreach is especially effective when it relates to a current, "hot" topic because audiences – legislators, employers, and the public – are receptive. The newly formed HFES Outreach Advisory Committee is developing a process to anticipate topical areas and ways to capitalize on such opportunities. An example of recent Society outreach activities was the distribution of press releases about newsworthy *Ergonomics in Design* articles. Interest in these articles, which focus on successful applications of human factors/ergonomics research and methods, is growing, and *EID* articles are being increasingly cited. HFES is also collaborating with the American Psychological Association to contribute HF/E knowledge to the issue of ballot design; recently HFES past president David Woods gave testimony on this issue.

The opportunities delineated above that pertain to the climate of a post-federal ergonomics standard are available not just to the Society but to all members. We are dependent on your contribution, for example, by writing a letter or providing expert testimony; HFES can help by providing some tools and guidance. Members may contribute in a variety of ways, such as:

- Writing an article on, for example, retaining an aging workforce through ergonomics, would be invaluable. HFES can assist with the editing and promotion by publishing the article or distributing press releases. Some trade magazines accept short articles.
- Another consideration is to write a letter to the editor of a magazine or newspaper. Some members frequently write an op/ed piece or letter to the editor of their regional newspaper in response to a recent news event. (See related article on page 2 for tips on writing to your newspaper.)
- Public speaking is another example of a great avenue of outreach. Consider providing a synopsis to HFES for possible press release.
- Keeping HFES informed. The Society often solicits contributions from members, but much has already been written that would help promote our profession. Please keep us

informed: Send the staff copies of articles you have written or lectures and talks that you have given pertaining to our outreach opportunities. We may be able to use them or summarize them for promotion.

Appreciation for the benefits of ergonomics is growing. We can do much not only to provide a service to others but also to strengthen our profession. The stage has been set on which ergonomics is playing a role, and now we need to take this opportunity to go out to meet a largely receptive audience. ☒

## IN THE NEWS

**Rani Lueder** was quoted in "The Dangerous Desk" by Karen Springen, which appeared in the March 26, 2001, issue of *Newsweek*. The article addressed ways to survive desk work, including tips for maintaining a healthy neck, back, arms, and hands. Lueder was also interviewed for a *New York Times* article, "How to Avoid Injuries," which appeared in the March 8, 2001, issue. Lueder noted the most common injuries for computer users and ways to avoid them.

**Wendy A. Rogers** was featured in "Home Medical Monitoring Made Difficult?" an on-line article that appeared at My.WebMD.com on March 12, 2001. Rogers and her colleagues conducted research on the usability of a blood glucose monitor and found that the device and its instructions were not sufficient to ensure safe and accurate patient-conducted readings. This same research was featured in a March 13, 2001 *Time Magazine* article entitled, "Do It Yourself?" by Ian K. Smith. Rogers was also interviewed regarding her glucose monitor study in an on-line article entitled "Study Is Sour on Blood Sugar Meters" by Serena Gordon at Healthscout.com on February 26, 2001.

**Don B. Chaffin, William S. Marras, and Barbara A. Silverstein** were quoted in "Ergonomics a Women's Issue?" by Lisa Girion, which appeared in the March 11, 2001, edition of the *Los Angeles Times*. The article focused on the relationship between the large number of women in low-paying jobs and the high percentage of repetitive stress injuries incurred in those jobs.

**Abbas Moallem and Richard A. Olsen** were quoted in "Three Cheers for Chairs" by Kim Boatman, which appeared in the *San Jose Mercury News SV Magazine* on February 18, 2001. Moallem and Olsen offered advice for purchasing correct seating, from office chairs to recliners.

**Diane L. Damos** was featured in "Suicide in the Air," a documentary that aired on The Learning Channel on November 1, 2000. Damos discussed psychological testing in the selection and certification of airline pilots. ☒

## Parasuraman New Chair of NRC Human Factors Committee

Raja Parasuraman has been elected chair of the National Research Council (NRC) Committee on Human Factors for a three-year term beginning 2001. He succeeds HFES President William Howell, who recently completed a long and successful term as chair of this committee.


The NRC is an independent organization that studies broad issues in human factors and ergonomics, examines their national policy implications, and offers recommendations and advice to the federal government and other agencies. Parasuraman, who is a professor of psychology and director of the Cognitive Science Laboratory at the Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C., invites all HFES members to contact him if they have suggestions for topics or issues that the committee might consider. He can be reached at 202/319-5755; parasuraman@cua.edu.

## Telecon on HF in Medical Device Design

The importance of human factors engineering (HF/E) in medicine was underscored by the release of the seminal report "To Err Is Human" by the National Academy of Sciences' Institute of Medicine. Medical devices use safety is an important component of the overall issue of HF in medical systems.

On February 14, HF/E specialists in FDA's Center for Devices and Radiological Health (CDRH) held a live interactive satellite teleconference entitled "Integrating Human Factors Engineering into Medical Device Design and Development."

The focus was on the role of the medical device industry in reducing errors involving medical device use, also referred to as "use error." The teleconference included two panels. The first was composed of representatives from CDRH; participants discussed the regulatory implications of HF/E engineering and the extent to which human factors is considered part of the overall review performed by CDRH. The second panel was composed of experts on HF/E from the medical device industry; this panel discussed integration of HF/E into design and development processes for medical devices for the purpose of making devices safe for users.

Following the discussions, panelists discussed questions sent in by viewers. The questions, typically from industry and health-care providers, were more numerous than could be answered during the remaining time. A guidance document made available prior to the telecon can be obtained at <http://www.fda.gov/cdrh/Useerror/teleconf101100.html>. 

- ★ **2001 SEGD Annual Conference and Expo**, May 30–June 2, 2001, Miami Beach, FL. Society for Environmental Graphic Design, 401 F Street NW, Suite 333, Washington, DC 20001; 202/638-5555; <http://www.segd.org>.
- ★ **SID 2001**, June 3–8, 2001, San Jose, CA. Society for Information Display, c/o Palisades Institute for Research Services, Inc., 411 Lafayette St., 2nd Floor, New York, NY 10003; 212/460-8090, fax 212/460-5460; [wklein@palisades.org](mailto:wklein@palisades.org), <http://www.sid.org>.
- ★ **ITS 11th Annual Meeting**, June 4–7, 2001, Miami Beach, FL. Intelligent Transportation Society of America, 2001 Annual Meeting Coordinator, 400 Virginia Ave., S.W., Suite 800, Washington, D.C. 20024-2730; 202/484-4847, fax 202/484-3483; <http://www.itsa.org>.
- ★ **4th Annual SAE Digital Human Modeling for Design and Engineering**, June 26–28, 2001, Arlington, VA. Society of Automotive Engineers, 400 Commonwealth Dr., Warrendale, PA 15096-0001; 724/776-4841, fax 724/776-5760; <http://www.sae.org>.
- ★ **17th World Congress of the International Association of Gerontology**, July 1–6, 2001, Vancouver, Canada. Congress Secretariat, Gerontology Research Centre at Simon Fraser University, 2800-515 W. Hastings St., Vancouver, BC, Canada V6B 5K3; 604/291-5062, fax 604/291-5066; [iag\\_congress@sfu.ca](mailto:iag_congress@sfu.ca), <http://www.harbour.sfu.ca/iag/>.
- ★ **45th Annual Meeting of the Human Factors and Ergonomics Society**, October 8–12, 2001, Minneapolis, MN. Hosted by the Upper Midwest Chapter. HFES, P.O. Box 1369, Santa Monica, CA 90406-1369; 310/394-1811, fax 310/394-2410; [lois@hfes.org](mailto:lois@hfes.org), <http://hfes.org>.
- ★ **HIS '01**, November 5–6, 2001, Arlington, VA. Trish Hamburger, Technical Program Chair, Human Systems Integration Symposium, NSWC-DD, 17320 Dahlgren Rd., Dahlgren, VA 22448-5100; 540/653-2300; [phambur@nswc.navy.mil](mailto:phambur@nswc.navy.mil). [*Abstracts due May 1, 2001.*]

★ indicates new listing

# Bulletin

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Opinions expressed in BULLETIN articles are those of the authors and should not be considered as expressions of official policy by the Human Factors and Ergonomics Society.

**FLASH!**

**Nomination ballots due  
April 16, 2001**

**Annual Meeting registration  
fees now at Web site – visit  
<http://hfes.org>**

**MARK YOUR CALENDAR:**

**HFES 45th Annual Meeting –  
October 8–12, 2001  
in Minneapolis**



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