

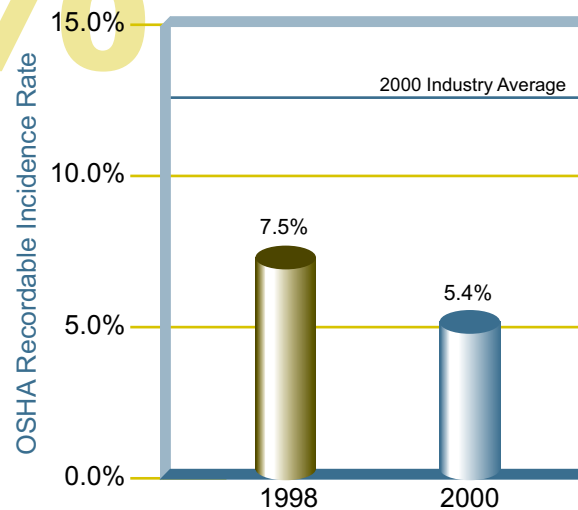
# DENSO

## DENSO Reduces Injuries Through a Kaizen Approach to Ergonomics with Humantech

DENSO Corporation is the fourth largest automotive supplier in the world. It supplies advanced technology, systems, and components, and is one of the nation's premier manufacturers of air conditioning components. Globally, the firm employs 85,000 people in 27 countries and regions, including 485 employees at DENSO Sales California, Inc., located in Long Beach.

# 27%

## 27% Reduction in Recordable Injuries



Humantech assisted DENSO's Long Beach, California, facility in integrating ergonomics problem solving with its existing Kaizen (continuous improvement) events to reduce recordable injuries by 27% over two years.

## The Challenge

In 1995, at a time when DENSO lacked a management position responsible for employee health and safety, its Long Beach, California, site's workers' compensation costs were rising to unacceptable levels. Injury reports reflected only acute injuries such as lacerations and burns, and repetitive motion and other types of musculoskeletal injuries were simply not documented. Many DENSO employees believed that pain and sore muscles were the results of any manual job, often respecting them as a way of proving an honest day's work. The following year, seven DENSO employees underwent surgery relating to musculoskeletal disorders, the workforce was aging, and the loss of skilled workers was affecting production.

## The Solution

Steve Karington joined the DENSO team as a safety engineer, and began to express the importance of musculoskeletal incident reporting and the value of a proactive safety system. He completed a comprehensive review of injuries and the current ergonomics program, which revealed that musculoskeletal disorders were indeed becoming a costly concern for the company.

In response to Karington's findings, DENSO commissioned the services of Humantech to train 60 company employees—including hourly workers, maintenance staff, engineers, management, and human resources—in skill-based ergonomics during 1997 and 1998. The training planted the seeds for an ergonomic improvement process through Kaizen, already a fixture at DENSO since the 1970s.

Kaizen, a Japanese word meaning gradual, orderly, and continuous improvement, represents a culture of sustained waste elimination in all systems and processes of an organization. The strategy requires regular input from the entire company staff, from operators to management. Thus, ergonomics at DENSO began as a way to reduce wasteful motion in work activities; the trained employees returned to the shop floor and applied their ergonomic training during routine Kaizen improvement events.

At the same time, DENSO set out to implement ergonomic improvements beginning with a formalized loss review. The trained employees targeted high-risk work areas and areas with a history of worker injury and discomfort. Humantech completed a risk map to help the company develop a plan for improvements, and to gain management commitment and support for the plan. As a result, DENSO successfully implemented improvements in several industrial workstations and departments.

## The Results

Employee involvement and management buy-in to the Kaizen ergonomic events have paid off; DENSO saw a significant reduction in recordable injuries and increased productivity in multiple lines. As a direct result, DENSO achieved a 27% reduction in recordable injuries between 1998 and 2000 at its Long Beach, California, site.

### About Humantech

For 30 years, global companies have relied on Humantech for workplace improvements. By combining the science of ergonomics and our unique 30-Inch View®—where people, work, and environment intersect—we deliver practical solutions that impact safety, quality, and productivity. At Humantech, we believe people make productivity happen. The 30-Inch View is a registered service mark of Humantech, Inc., 2008.