

## #5 Planing Mill Hula saw operator

### Problem

The hula saw operator leans forward and reaches to grab and pull the boards closer. **Before** These awkward postures and forceful exertions can cause shoulder and back injuries.

### Solution

At the Georgia Pacific Philomath planing mill, an ergonomics committee was formed to evaluate jobs in the mill. The committee met with the hula saw operators and millwrights to identify the ergonomic hazards and brainstorm solutions.

The conveyor height was lowered to present the boards at a more comfortable height. Foot-controlled lift skids were installed so the boards don't stack up on each other. Powered chains were installed to bring the boards closer. These changes eliminated

the awkward postures and forceful exertions when reaching for the boards. Video monitors were installed in front of the operator to view 16 foot or longer boards to the left and right of the operator, to reduce bending and twisting.

The grader employees are very happy about the changes. The hula saw job used to be the most physically demanding job the graders rotated through; now, it is probably the least demanding. During and following the changes, the volume of lumber planed increased by 25 %. The kind of lumber shifted from wide/long to narrow/short, which has greatly increased the piece count. The changes allowed the hula saw operator to handle the increased volume and number of pieces, while reducing the injury risk. Other changes discussed to further improve the hula saw include:

- C Converting to hip controls for the saws that have the height and width adjustable. One shift prefers hip controls while the other wants to stay with the foot controls. So, the best solution may be a combination of both.
- C Installing a variable-speed takeaway belt, which will help graders.

At Douglas County Forest Products, the hula saw machine center was also redesigned so the boards are now presented close to the operator at about waist level. These changes eliminated the awkward postures and forceful exertions when reaching for the boards. The hula saw is now off the main line, producing fewer cross-ups. This makes the job easier for the grader because he/she works with less mixed loads.

### Contacts

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**After**

