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Volume Four AFGE LOCAL 2505 SSA OKLAHOMA December 1989

KEYBOARDS TRIGGERING INFORMATION AGE PLAGUE?

There is growing evidence that prolonged VDT keyboarding may be dangerous to delicate body joints. Computers are "getting on people's nerves" in a very real and sinister way.

With cases proliferating among the nation's 28 million work-place VDT users, repetitive strain injury (RSI) has been dubbed "the industrial disease of the Information Age."

Fears have been expressed about radiation dangers from VDTs, but no one suspected that gentle key tapping might be fraught with danger until the mid-1980's.

According to the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health, the most common forms of RSI are:

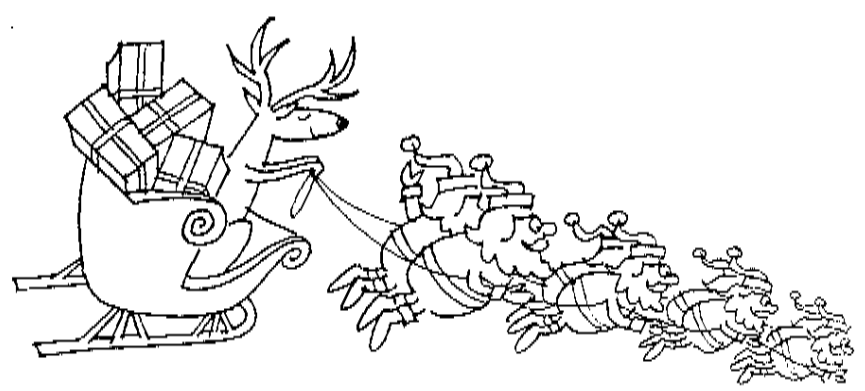
Tendinitis (including variations known as tenosynovitis and epicondylitis) - inflammation and swelling of tendons, tendon sheaths and nearby muscle tissue; thoracic outlet syndrome - compression of nerves in the neck and shoulder; Raynaud's syndrome (also called white hand syndrome) - impaired circulation caused by vibration shock or cold; and carpal tunnel syndrome - compression of the median nerve that gives feeling to most of the hand.

Carpal tunnel can cripple hands, rendering them useless for typing or grasping objects heavier than a few ounces. Ergonomists believe VDTs are a factor in RSI because they encourage large-scale increases in rapid hand movements.

For some victims of RSI, getting an early accurate diagnosis is an ordeal in itself. The two most common forms - tendinitis and carpal tunnel - often develop slowly and are not easily pinpointed in early stages.

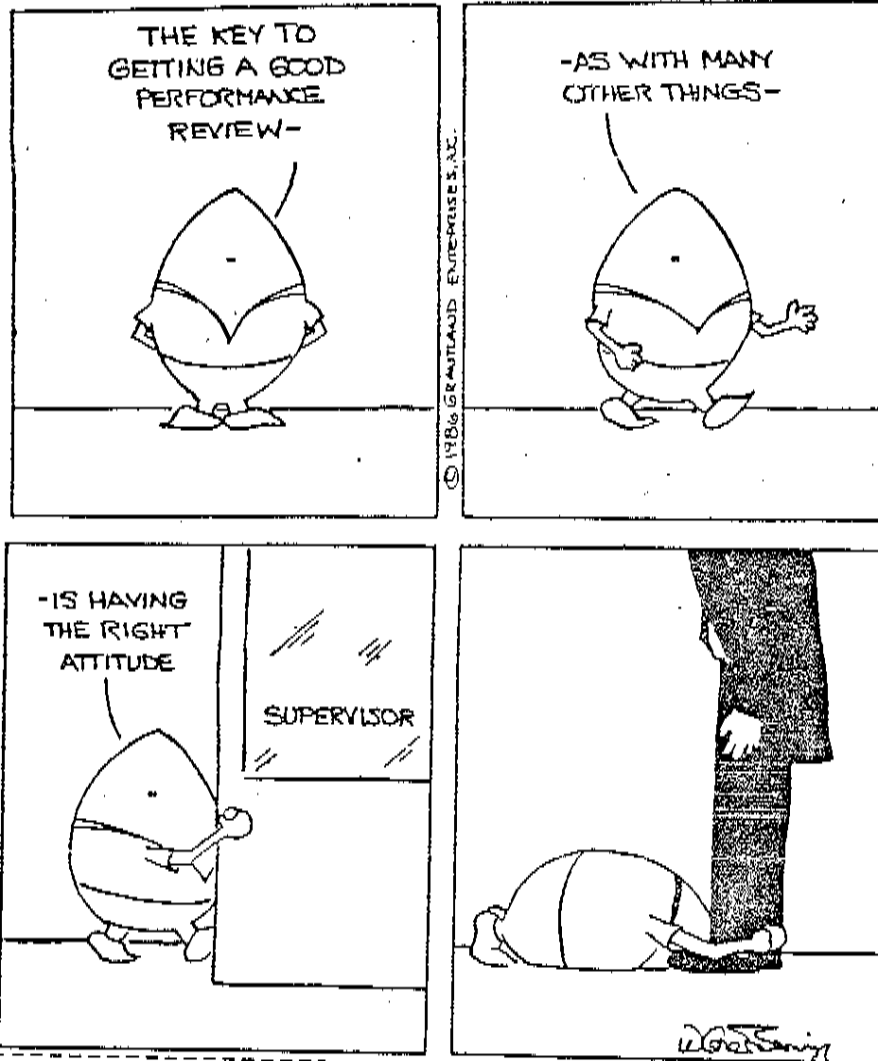
The danger in delayed diagnosis is that effects of severe, long-term carpal tunnel - including nerve damage and atrophy of lower thumb muscles - are usually irreversible. As treatment is delayed, damage may be increasing.

Instances of carpal tunnel syndrome have already occurred among Field Office employees: so you should not assume that you will be immuned. If you believe that you are experiencing repetitive strain injury symptoms, you should seek a diagnosis. If an injury is diagnosed, you should contact management about filing a workman's compensation claim. (See Article 34 of the National Agreement between SSA & AFGE). You are entitled to Union representation when pursuing a workman's compensation claim.



All interviewers are probably aware that certain objects, such as staplers and hole punches, can be used by angry claimants as weapons. Therefore, they should be careful about leaving them on their desks within the reach of claimants. However, there is one object that you have probably not viewed as a potential weapon.

Recently, an angry claimant attacked a female SR in San Francisco with her VDT keyboard. This employee suffered serious internal injuries and she is off work indefinitely on workman's compensation. If you look at the keyboard from the standpoint of a weapon, you will see that it could be used to inflict considerable physical harm. With this in mind, you should consider actions to take if a claimant becomes angry to the point that he/she may engage in physical violence.



Local Meeting

AFGE Local 2505 met Sunday, November 26, 1989. The meeting was called to order by President Sy Overturf. The minutes of the previous meeting were read and approved. The Treasurer's report was given and approved.

During the meeting the members present approved the budget for the year 1990, organizing new members, status of a pending arbitration case and a busy signal report from the TSC. Also discussed having a 50/50 drawing at the next meeting to raise money for PAC. Meeting adjourned.

What is a 50/50 drawing? A 50/50 drawing is a drawing for one-half of the pot. The size of the pot is determined by how many tickets are put into the pot. We plan to have a 50/50 drawing at the next meeting. Come and see your Union in action and take place in this drawing. You must be present to win.

The other one-half of the pot will be forwarded to National Office to be added to the Political Action fund that National Office uses to help elect or re-elect members to Congress that are attuned to the needs of Federal Employees. Your contribution will be helpful.

The following letter is from an employee who had recently been restored to her CR position after a favorable arbitration decision on her adverse action appeal. Perhaps this employee's manner of expressing her appreciation will give you better insight into what the Union is all about. The letter is verbatim except for names being omitted.

"Dear _____:

There are absolutely no words that can express my gratitude to you and the Union for all you have done for me. I am back doing DIB and loving it. Even though I stayed in (D/O) I feel no stress factor from management now. Hopefully, it will finally be over and I will be able to blend into the woodwork. I will really be complete when that happens.

_____, I thank you and your family for all your support. I thank your family for the many hours and days that they had to be without you. I really appreciate the endless hours you worked on my briefs. You obviously knew what you were doing. I hope I never have to go through this again. I thank God for people like you and the Union.

This case involved a particularly flagrant violation of an employee's rights. The manager upped the ante on performance requirements after the close of the performance improvement period, and speculated that the employee would not have acceptably performed work that she was denied the opportunity to complete. In the absence of a Union to represent her and a contract protection, it is unlikely that this employee could ever have realized the enforcement of these rights.



HOLIDAY BONUS BUCKS CAMPAIGN

All members should have received a mailing in Mid-October from the AFGE National Office concerning this incentive. As a reminder, members are entitled to receive the following incentives for signing up new members:

- (1) \$5.00 for each new member, or
- (2) \$25.00 for three members when the Form 1187's are submitted at one time.

This offer is applicable to a Form 1187's submitted through December 1989.

Also, you are reminded that Local 2505 continues to have a standing offer of a \$5.00 incentive for each new member signed up at any time. This \$5.00 per member incentive will be paid in addition to the incentive paid by AFGE National Office. For example, if you sign up 3 new members by the end of December, you will receive a total of (\$25.00 + \$15.00) \$40.00.

AFGE MASTER CARD PROGRAM

Applications for the AFGE Master Card are available to members at any time upon request from either your President or your secretary/treasurer. As a reminder, some of this card's features are as follows:

1. There is NO ANNUAL FEE.
 2. It has lower interest rates. The rate is set at 5% above the prime rate as published in the Wall Street Journal's "Money Rates" section on the last day of the prior quarter. The rate is 15.5% for the current quarter.
 3. It has True Credit. You pay interest only beginning with the transaction date of the purchase. This results in you paying interest for fewer days on new purchases if you carry over a balance from the prior month. (About 80% of card holders do this.)
 4. You have loss protection against the \$50.00 liability in event that your card is stolen or lost.
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Remember the next Union meeting. The date, time and place will be announced later.

Let's have a successful meeting and start 1990 out just right with your Union.

To each of you and your families
Local 2505 wishes you a very
Merry Christmas and a Happy New
Year.

