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OSHA TO DEVELOP ERGONOMICS GUIDELINES FOR RETAIL GROCERY STORES

ARLINGTON, Virginia (June 10, 2002) – Occupational Safety and Health (OSHA) Administrator John Henshaw announced today that his agency will begin work on developing voluntary ergonomics guidelines in collaboration with the retail food industry. This reflects Secretary of Labor Elaine Chao’s commitment to develop industry and task-specific guidelines to reduce and prevent ergonomic injuries that occur in the workplace.

The National Grocers Association (N.G.A.) shares Secretary Chao’s goal to help workers by reducing ergonomic injuries and to pursue ergonomic guidelines rather than the course of mandatory standards that were rejected and rescinded by Congress last year. N.G.A. President and CEO Tom Zaucha applauded the cooperative effort announced by Assistant Secretary Henshaw, and pledged to work with OSHA to develop guidelines that assist retailers in developing ergonomic solutions.

“The retail grocery industry is dedicated to providing a safe and healthy workplace. Employees are a company’s most important assets,” said Zaucha. “N.G.A. has consistently found that voluntary collaborative efforts between government and the private sector are far more workable than costly and burdensome mandates. N.G.A. will work cooperatively with OSHA as it proceeds in the coming months to develop industry guidelines for retail food stores.” Zaucha also assured that retailers will continue to review, refine, and implement policies and workplace practices to assure the well being of employees.

Draft guidelines for the retail grocery industry are expected to be ready for public comment later this year.

N.G.A. is the national trade association representing the retail and wholesale grocers that comprise the independent sector of the food distribution industry. An independent retailer is a privately owned or controlled food retail company operating in a variety of formats. Some are publicly traded but with controlling shares held by the family. Most independent operators are serviced by wholesale distributors, while others may be partially or fully self-distributing. Independents are the true “entrepreneurs” of the grocery industry and dedicated to their customers, associates, and communities. N.G.A. members include retail and wholesale grocers and their state associations, as well as manufacturers and service suppliers.