

# Sitting Down On the Job: An Evaluation of Unicor® Ergonomic Chairs

## Who is Unicor?

Through a special partnership with the U.S. Government, Unicor, a subsidiary of the Federal Prison Industries, Inc.,\* supplies Federal agencies with office furniture at competitive prices. This fact sheet evaluates Unicor's line of ergonomic chairs and offers guidance on ordering from outside sources should Unicor not be able to provide for your needs. It is designed to help managers and supervisors find the best chairs for themselves and their employees.

Currently, there are no restrictions on using the term "ergonomically designed" to describe chairs or any other type of office furniture. Therefore, you must pay attention to the claims made by chair manufacturers. The chair is the most intimate piece of equipment the office worker has, yet it is often overlooked in the design of a workstation.

## Chair Classification

To help office managers select the most appropriate furniture for the office, designated categories of chairs (based on features) are listed in the box below.

### Category I: All features essential to a multi-tasked office

- Seat height adjustment accessible from seated position.
- Seat back height changed with ease; no latch needed.
- Seat pan depth adjusts for users with long legs.
- Contoured seat with waterfall front made of firm foam encased in comfortable, breathable fabric.
- Seat angle and back support move independently and lock into position selected by the user.
- Chair rotates 360 degrees.
- Passive lumbar support provided.
- Armrests easily controlled horizontally and vertically from seated position using paddle or swivel.
- Adjustments clearly labeled.
- Five casters roll easily over carpeted surfaces.

### Category II: Minimally acceptable design for office work

- Seat height and depth adjustments accessible from seated position.
- Back support tilts.
- Armrests adjust vertically.
- Seat has waterfall front and rotates 360 degrees.
- Five casters roll easily over carpeted surfaces.

## Chairs for Special Needs

Managers can take active steps to customize the work environment and help to alleviate discomfort for those employees who experience musculoskeletal pain, work in "special" environments, or are larger or smaller than the "average" person.

Some vendors offer chairs that are specifically designed for small, medium, or large frames. Additional features might include prominently contoured seatpans to allow maximum body surface contact with minimum pressure, adjustable neckrolls, and seatpans and back supports that vibrate. Some specialized armrests have more than the usual number of adjustments and are often longer, wider, and softer. Many chairs offer air bladders that allow the lumbar support to be adapted to fit the specific curvature of an individual's back.

## Obtaining a Waiver from Unicor

Currently, Unicor does not offer chairs with the features outlined above. Managers and supervisors may order from commercial vendors, but must first request a waiver from Unicor because Unicor is a mandatory source provider for items listed in its Schedule of Products. The waiver should detail the features you need that are not available from Unicor.

A Unicor sales consultant evaluates each waiver request on a case-by-case basis. Be sure your request includes the following information:

- **Point of contact.** Name and title of the appropriate contact person. Complete mailing address including agency name, street, city, state, and zip code.
- **Phone and fax numbers.** For contacting purposes.
- **Description of items.** Descriptive material, such as illustrations, drawings, brochures, etc., that convey the characteristics, and/or construction of item(s) in question, including the Unicor part number or NSN. If due to technical differences, you must provide a comparison.
- **Justification.** An explanation as to why Unicor products do not meet your needs.
- **Price and quantity.** Estimated unit price and number for each item. If systems furniture, be certain to specify the number and cost of completed workstations. If request is for component parts only, please specify.
- **Realistic delivery date.** Delivery requirements inconsistent with those referenced on the General Services Administration Federal Supply Schedule require written certification from your contracting officer. This certification must state that the items are available from the outside source within the required time frame indicated in the waiver request. You must specify the delivery date as the month, day, and year that the product is needed.

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\* Federal Prison Industries Inc., was created in 1934 to use the ready inmate work force to perform labor-intensive tasks. It is a self-supporting enterprise that provides a variety of products and services.

Visit <http://www.unicor.gov> for general information about Unicor products and their "escape-proof" guarantee, to place orders, and to check the status of an order. Or call Unicor's Customer Service Center toll-free at 800-827-3168.



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## Finding the best ergonomic chair for video display terminal workstation use

Unicor® Model and Price Range	Overall Rating	Features and Options
<b>Category I</b>		
<p><b>Legacy</b>      \$230-320</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• LB arm chair</li> <li>• LB chair w/out arms</li> <li>• MB arm chair</li> <li>• MB chair w/out arms</li> <li>• HB arm chair</li> <li>• HB chair w/out arms</li> <li>• Deluxe HB arm chair</li> </ul>	Very Good	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Padded with Enersorb® “memory foam” that conforms to the user’s weight &amp; shape.</li> <li>• Lumbar support automatically adjusts according to the pressure applied to the seat back.</li> <li>• Spring lock paddles control adjustable pneumatic seat height, forward tilt lock, &amp; free-float lock.</li> <li>• Adjustable seat height has a unique mechanism to adjust the height without using a latch.</li> <li>• Armrests adjust vertically via a numbered dial on either side; in &amp; out via a paddle.</li> </ul> <p><b>Options:</b> Sled legs as a stool with adjustable 10” height or at a fixed height/position.*</p>
<p><b>Classic Ergo</b>    \$285-485</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• LB chair</li> <li>• LB chair w/ adjustable lumbar</li> <li>• LB chair w/out arms</li> <li>• LB chair w/out arms w/ adjustable lumbar</li> <li>• HB chair</li> <li>• HB chair w/ adjustable lumbar</li> <li>• Deluxe chair</li> </ul>	Good	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Padded with fabricated foam cushions.</li> <li>• Lumbar support fully adjustable using a turn-crank.</li> <li>• Spring lock paddles, forward tilt lock, &amp; free-float lock only.</li> <li>• Adjustable seat height using a latch.</li> <li>• Armrests adjust vertically via a numbered dial on either side; in &amp; out via a knob located under the seat.</li> </ul> <p><b>Options:</b> Sled legs as a stool with adjustable 10” height or at a fixed height/position.* Deluxe chair features an extra wide seating area, forward tilt option, infinite position tilt lock, adjustable arms, and built-in lumbar support.</p>
<b>Category II</b>		
<p><b>Diva I &amp; II</b>    \$565-640</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diva I arm chair</li> <li>• Diva I task chair</li> <li>• Diva II arm chair</li> <li>• Diva II task chair</li> </ul>	Fair to Good	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Padded with fabricated foam cushions.</li> <li>• Fixed lumbar support, tilt tension, &amp; seat depth automatically adjust according to the pressure applied to the seat back.</li> <li>• Button switches, similar to automobile seat switches, manipulate a hidden cable network to control the up-and-down, free-float, &amp; forward-lock movements.</li> </ul> <p><b>Options:</b> Seat height, armrests, tilt tension, &amp; seat depth are all fixed. <b>Note:</b> Diva I is slightly larger than Diva II.</p>
<p><b>Tempo</b>      \$310</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• LB arm chair</li> <li>• LB chair w/out arms</li> <li>• HB arm chair</li> <li>• HB chair w/out arms</li> </ul>	Fair	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Padded with fabricated foam cushions.</li> <li>• Armrests are adjustable four ways.</li> <li>• Lumbar support is fixed, &amp; the overall shape is minimal.</li> <li>• Seat height, back depth, &amp; swivel are adjustable.</li> </ul> <p><b>Options:</b> High-back model available with tilt lock and tension control; arms and stool base also available.</p>

LB = low back; MB = medium back; HB = high back.

Prices listed were correct at press time and are subject to change.

\* Sled leg chairs do **not** meet the minimum acceptable design criteria for office work as they do not move easily or provide height/position adjustability.

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