

Display Screen Equipment Advice for Safety Reps



Introduction

The Health and Safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regulations 1992 (as amended 2002) states employers should undertake risk assessments for staff working on display screen equipment. To avoid staff experiencing discomfort they should provide breaks and changes of activity; provide training and information to staff; provide eye tests where these are appropriate; and ensure workstations meet minimum ergonomic requirements. Under the Safety Representatives and Safety Committees Regulations 1977, the employer should also consult with you as the safety rep before introducing new technology into the workplace.

The HSE advises that the employer's risk assessment should address the following factors:

1. Task related- repetition, working postures, force and duration of exposure
2. Worker related – individual differences
3. Environment related – working environment and psycho-social factors

YOUR ROLE

It is important that you identify the sources of risk, and encourage your employer to address the issue before members start having serious health problems. Your checklist of inspection should include the following:

THE WORKSTATION AND WORK AREAS/ORGANISATION

- Is the workstation too high or too low?
- Can the workstation be adjusted for individual users?
- Is the chair, tables etc designed to allow good work posture?
- Is all work organised so that no member has monotonous and strenuous work?
- Can the member work at their own pace and take breaks during the work?
- Is any work task regarded as so stressful that its organisation should be reviewed?

WHEN WATCHING THE MEMBER USING THE WORK STATION IS THERE?

- Awkward movements of hand, wrist, arm or shoulder?
- Prolonged or excessive use of the mouse?

ENVIRONMENT AROUND THE WORKSTATION

- Are there awkward movements of hand, wrist, arm or shoulder?
- Are there bright light sources behind the display screen that can create contrast problems, making it difficult for members to clearly see their work?
- Is there inadequate lighting?
- Is there reflected light from polished surfaces such as a keyboards which may cause annoyance, discomfort, or loss in visibility?

Display Screen Equipment Advice for Safety Reps



- Is it noisy?
- Is the member exposed to poorly designed ventilation systems, i.e. air conditions or heaters that directly “dump” air on users? Is the workstation directly under air conditioning vents?
- Is there dry air that affects the eyes?
- Is there poor air circulation, creating stuffy or stagnant conditions?
- Are temperatures above or below standard comfort levels?

USE OF LAP TOPS & OTHER PORTABLE EQUIPMENT

- How heavy and for what distances is the user expected to carry this equipment?
- Is the laptop able to be placed on a firm surface at the appropriate height for the member?

TRAINING

- Has the member received appropriate training on how to adjust seating and equipment to utilise the workstation safely?
- Was the training adequate - i.e. did it include ways of avoiding repetitive strain injuries?

ARE PROBLEMS?

- Ignored by the member?
- Not reported to management?
- Not reported in writing when the member becomes injured?

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

Depending on the problem, the following solutions may be appropriate when you raise the issue with your employer.

- Change the way the work is done
- Redesign work area or work station
- Reduce the pace of work
- Introduce rest breaks and more variety of tasks
- Implement training to include risk awareness and safer methods of work.