

## POLICY ON WORKING WITH DISPLAY SCREEN EQUIPMENT



### INTRODUCTION

This policy defines the requirements of the Health and Safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regulations 1992, and came into force on the 1 January 1993  
See Appendix A

### Overall Purpose

To ensure that all staff required to use Display Screen Equipment do so in an environment and in a manner which safeguards their personal health and safety.

### DEFINITIONS

- **Display Screen Equipment (DSE)** means any alphanumeric or graphic display screen
- **Workstation** means an assembly comprising:
  - a) Display Screen Equipment
  - b) any optional accessories to the display screen
  - c) Any disk drive, telephone, modem printer, document holder, work chair, work desk, work surface, lighting or other item peripheral to the display screen equipment
  - d) the immediate work environment around the display screen equipment
- **User** means an employee who habitually uses display screen equipment as a significant part of their normal work  
See Appendix B

### POLICY

**DRH** will:

1. Ensure that an assessment of all workstations is performed to assess the health and safety risks to the DSE user and reduce any risks identified to the lowest extent reasonably practicable.  
Appendix C
2. Ensure that the work of DSE workers is planned in such a way that daily work on the display screen is periodically interrupted by breaks. The recommendation is that short, frequent breaks are more satisfactory than occasional, longer breaks: e.g. 5 - 10 minute break after 50-60 minutes continuous screen and/or keyboard work is likely to be better than a 15 minute break every 2 hours.
3. Ensure that all new and existing employees will receive the opportunity for vision screening by Occupational Health staff.
  - a) Before working with a DSE
  - b) At regular intervals normally 2 yearly
  - c) When a user experiences visual difficulties working with DSE.

4. Ensure that where a visual defect, which requires correction when working with a display screen, is identified, the employee will be referred to an optician.
5. Provide the employee with spectacles, where they are needed to correct vision defects at the viewing distance used specifically for display screen work.

## **RESPONSIBILITIES**

**Managers** will be responsible for the following:-

- a) Arranging for the assessments of DSE workstations and reduce any risks identified:
  - i) When new workstations are set up
  - ii) On the annual Health and Safety audit
- b) To ensure users receive new equipment and appropriate training on how to work with DSE in a safe working environment.
- c) To inform and arrange with Occupational Health vision screening and training when required for the DSE user.

**Occupational Health** will be responsible for the following:

- a) To perform Titmus vision screening on identified DSE users and refer to an optician as necessary, pre-employment, 2 yearly, and on request.
- b) To provide health and safety input to DSE training at manager's request.
- c) To advise on problems with workstation assessment.
- d) To advise manager and user if specific health problems are identified.

The **Chief Executive** will be responsible for the following

- a) Communicating the policy to managers and staff
- b) Informing staff on measures taken to comply with the Regulations
- c) Funding the purchase of spectacles specified by the optician, as necessary for DSE work.
- d) Monitoring the application of the policy.



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## **REFERENCE**

HEALTH AND SAFETY DISPLAY SCREEN REGULATIONS 1992

## REGULATION REQUIREMENTS

### **DRH must:**

- a) Assess the workstation for possible health and safety risks and reduce them to the lowest extent reasonably practicable
- b) Ensure new workstations meet the requirements of the Regulations from 1 January 1993 and existing workstations meet them by the 1st January 1997(Regulation 6)
- c) Plan the worker's activity in such a way that daily work on display screen equipment is periodically interrupted by breaks. (Regulation 4)
- d) Provide eye sight test on request:
  - i) For those using DSE when the Regulations came into force and for new DSE users before they start working with the equipment.
  - ii) At regular intervals
  - iii) When a user experiences visual difficulties working with DSE. (Regulation 5)
- e) inform employees of all aspects of health and safety regarding working with DSE and provide them with information on health and safety and measures taken to comply with the Regulations (Regulations 6 & 7)

## DEFINITION OF A VDU USER

A VDU User means an employee who habitually uses display screen equipment as a significant part of their normal work.

In some cases it will be clear that use of display screen equipment is more or less continuous on most days and the individuals concerned should be regarded as users or operators. This will include the majority of those whose main job involves, for example, display screen based data input or sales and order processing. Where use is less continuous or frequent, other factors connected with the job must be assessed. It will generally be appropriate to classify the person concerned as a user or operator if all of the following criteria apply:

- a) the individual depends on the use of display screen equipment to do their job, as alternative means are not readily available for achieving the same results.
- b) the individual has no discretion as to use or non-use of the display screen equipment.
- c) the individual needs significant training and/or particular skills in the use of display screen equipment to do the job.
- d) the individual normally uses display screen equipment for continuous spells of an hour or more at a time
- e) the individual uses display screen equipment in this way more or less daily
- f) fast transfer of information between the user and screen is an important requirement of the job
- g) the performance requirements of the system demand high levels of attention and concentration by the user, for example, where the consequences of error may be critical.

## DISPLAY SCREEN EQUIPMENT WORKSTATION ASSESSMENT

APPENDIX C

Possible risks which have been associated with display screen equipment work relate to physical (musculoskeletal) problem, visual fatigue and mental stress. These are not unique to display screen work nor an inevitable consequence of it. All the known health problems which may be associated with display screen work can be prevented altogether by good design of the workplace and the job and by worker training and consultation.

Risk assessments should first identify any hazards and then evaluate risks and their extent.

Most assessments will need to be recorded, not necessarily on a 'paper and pencil' record but could be stored electronically.

A checklist can be used as part of an assessment (see appendix D) Whatever type of checklist is used, employers should ensure workers have received the necessary training before being asked to complete one.

Those responsible for the assessment should be familiar with the main requirements of the Regulations and have the ability to:

- (a) assess risks from the workstation and the kind of display screen work being done, for example, from a checklist completed by them or others;
- (b) draw upon additional sources of information on risk as appropriate
- (c) based upon the assessment of risk, draw valid and reliable conclusion
- (d) make a clear record of assessment and communicate the findings to those who need to take appropriate action
- (e) recognise their own limitations as to the assessments so that further expertise can be called upon as necessary

Assessments can be made by health and safety personnel or managers, with or training for, these abilities, or the trained risk assessors

The views of the individual users are an essential part of the assessment. Safety representatives should also be encouraged to play a full part in the assessment process.

The assessment would need to be reviewed in the light of changes to the display screen workers population or changes in the individual's capability and where there has been some significant change to the workstation.

The checklist to assess minimum requirements for workstations is contained in annex D and is in line with Regulation three of the display screen equipment regulations

## **WILL YOUR DISPLAY SCREEN EQUIPMENT DAMAGE YOUR HEALTH**

### **THE POSSIBLE EFFECTS OF HEALTH AND WAYS OF AVOIDING THEM**

#### **1. Upper Limb Disorders**

There have been reports of DSE users who have experienced pain or discomfort in their arms or shoulders following working at a keyboard. The problems range from short-term soreness to long term tissue damage.

##### **Possible cause:**

- Long periods of sitting in one position
- Poor positioning of hands and wrists e.g. workstation too high or too low
- Pressure of heavy workload, tight deadlines

##### **Possible cures**

- Change your position as often as possible.
- Can your work plan be altered to incorporate changes of work?
- Do not stay sitting at your desk when it is time for a break, get up and walk around.
- Are you sitting comfortably? When at your workstation, your arms should be approximately horizontal in relation to the keyboard and your eyes at the same height as the top of the VDU casing

#### **2. Eye Sight**

There were fears that DSE users might experience eye damage, especially following reports of eye discomfort and soreness and 'after image' when the operator looks away from the screen. Extensive research, including a two year study for the United Nations, concluded that DSE's do not cause permanent damage or disease to the eye.

##### **Possible causes of eye fatigue:**

- Poor positioning of the screen
- Unstable screen image e.g., flickering
- Poor lighting or glare on the screen
- Bi-focal users may require a different pair of glasses to prevent constant raising or lowering of the head.
- Contact lens users may experience 'dry eyes' due to dry office environment.

##### **Possible cures:**

- Adjust screen height to suit your own height
- Can the image be adjusted? If not, call in the engineers
- Arrange your work area so that bright lights are not shining directly onto the screen, use blinds if available.
- Those with contact lenses may need to remember to blink more or use substitute tears.

#### **3. Fatigue and Stress**

Concern has been voiced over the stress levels of those who work with VDU's. It is unlikely to be the equipment but more often the type of work being conducted and the speed by which it is required.

**Possible causes:**

- ❑ Poorly functioning system, unable to cope with the demands of the user
- ❑ Inadequate training for the task required
- ❑ Poor workplace design
- ❑ High pressured deadlines
- ❑ Repetitive job

**Possible cures:**

- ❑ Introduction of up-dated systems.
- ❑ Clear instruction and training of equipment to be used and the job required
- ❑ Thoughtful design of workstation area and ergonomic principles applied to the user
- ❑ Consultation with the manager to arrange for breaks in the working day.

#### **4. Other Problems**

##### **Epilepsy**

A very small number of people (1 in 10,000) suffer from photosensitive epilepsy. Their seizures are triggered by flickering lights and striped patterns and they may be affected by DSE in some circumstances. However, this condition is rare and even those affected by it have found they can work without provoking an attack.

##### **Facial Dermatitis**

Small numbers of people have experienced skin irritation or rashes, the cause is not known. It is likely that low humidity in the office could be a factor or the presence of electrostatic changes in the atmosphere.

The office environment would need to be examined to determine the possible cause e.g., type of flooring or ventilation.

##### **Radiation**

The levels emitted from DSE are found to be well below international recommendations and as such are not considered to be a significant risk to health. Therefore, no special protective measures are required to ensure the safety of the staff.

##### **Pregnancy**

Most research has now been carried out to see if there is a link between levels of miscarriage and birth defects and usage of DSE. Taken overall, there is no shown link at present, although research is continuing in this field. However, it is acknowledged that people planning pregnancy or those already pregnant may have concerns and therefore must be given the opportunity to discuss their fears with a suitably qualified person. Queries of this nature should be referred to Occupational Health.



**WORKSTATION ASSESSMENT**

Date.....Time.....

Name of Employee.....Location.....

Name of Assessor.....Employees Manager.....

**Action required as a result of assessment:**

AREA	PROBLEM	ACTION REQUIRED
DISPLAY SCREEN		
KEYBOARD		
WORK SURFACE		
WORK CHAIR		
SPACE REQUIREMENTS		
ENVIRONMENT		
REFLECTION/GLARE		
NOISE		
HEAT/HUMIDITY		
TASK DESIGN SOFT WARE		
GENERAL SAFETY		
TRAINING		
EYE & EYE SIGHT TEST		
OTHER EQUIPMENT REQUIREMENTS		
MISCELLANEOUS		