



HR Guide - Working from Home Safely

Overview

All Workplace Health & Safety requirements that apply in your usual work location also apply when you are working from a home based office. This guide has been developed to provide information on safe work practices, emergency response and expected behaviours when working from home.

The Home Safety Guide provides information on:

- 1.Preventing slips, trips and falls
- 2.Use of display screens
- 3.Reporting incidents, smoking, use of drugs and alcohol
- 4.Manual handling
- 5.Electrical safety
- 6.Fire Safety
- 7.Emergency response
- 8.Working smarter
- 9.Periodic home inspections

Emergency Response

EMERGENCY PHONE NUMBER 000

When you call 000 you will be connected to an operator who will ask you which service you require – AMBULANCE, FIRE or POLICE.

You will then be asked by the operator of that service for:

- Street name
- Number/location
- What has happened
- Your name
- Your phone number
- Any other relevant details e.g. nature of the problem, number of people involved

Preventing slips, trips and falls

To prevent slips, trips and falls:

1. Ensure suitable footwear is worn while you are working, note socks are not classed as appropriate footwear as they can be very slippery when worn on timber and tiled surfaces

2. Ensure there is adequate lighting in the home office and any common areas accessed during work
3. Try to avoid changes of level; use handrails when walking up or down stairs
4. Ensure carpet, mats and other floor coverings are securely fixed without curling/lifted edges. Tape or tack down the edges of floor coverings if they are beginning to curl
5. Ensure that any carpets, mats or rugs placed on shiny surfaces such as polished ceramic tiles, porcelain tiles or polished timber floors are secured with anti-slip products. Loose items can be particularly dangerous and slippery
6. Arrange furniture and/or secure wires to avoid trailing wires
7. Ensure there is adequate provision of appropriate storage cupboards/containers
8. Clean spills up immediately; and
9. Keep work areas tidy and clear of obstructions or objects lying around that may cause you to trip

Manual Handling

Handling loads can cause serious injury, particularly to the back. The checklist below highlights some activities that may increase the risk:

- Handling loads that are heavy, bulky, difficult to grasp or unstable
- Awkward lifting, reaching or handling
- Pushing or pulling
- Repetitive handling that does not allow enough rest time between loads; and
- Twisting and stooping

When lifting is necessary, good techniques can help reduce the risks. These include:

- Keeping the feet apart, bending the knees and maintain the natural curve of your spine
- Keeping the load as close to the body as possible
- Minimising the twisting of the torso if turning to one side
- Lifting or carrying goods in small amounts
- Wrapping the load or using gloves if it has sharp edges; and
- Using a table or bench as a halfway resting point

Electrical safety

Listed below are simple checks that employees can take to prevent harm or injury when using electrical equipment in the home:

1. Check that plugs are not damaged or worn
2. Check that the outer cover of the equipment is not damaged, for example look for loose parts

3. Check for burn marks or staining that suggests overheating
4. Check that the electrical equipment is in good condition and free from any visual faults
5. Check leads, wires or cables for damage to the outer covering
6. Check that the outer covering of the cable or wire is gripped (i.e. complete and free of damage), where it enters the plug or the equipment
7. Check the domestic electrical systems are adequate for electrical equipment; and
8. Ensure electrical equipment is turned off before it is checked

Safe use of display screens

When working with display screens it is important to adjust the workstation to enable comfortable set up. This will help prevent undue tiredness. Remember to stretch and change position regularly to help reduce tiredness and prevent pains in the hands, wrists, arms, neck, shoulders or back.

When using a display screen check that:

1. There is enough space in general so that you can move freely between the work on the desk and the display
2. The display screen is placed at the right angle on the desk to allow work to be done comfortably, for example without having to make awkward movements
3. The screen and computer is clean and free from dust and dirt
4. There is suitable lighting so that the fine detail on the screen can be seen and read
5. The screen is free from glare and reflections
6. The 'brightness' and 'contrast' controls are properly adjusted to prevent eye strain; and
7. The screen is clear and readable, and without flicker

Eye Care

Working at your computer for long periods can be a visually demanding task and may cause your eyes to become irritated and fatigued. Therefore, you should give special attention to vision care, including the following recommendations:

Resting your eyes - Give your eyes frequent breaks. Periodically look away from the monitor and focus at a distant point. This may also be a good time to stretch, breathe deeply, and relax.

Cleaning your monitor and glasses - Keep your display screen and your glasses or contact lenses clean. If you use a glare-reduction filter, clean it according to the manufacturer's directions.

Having your eyes examined - To be sure that your vision is adequately corrected, have your eyes examined regularly by a vision care specialist. If you wear bifocals, trifocals, or progressive addition lenses, you may find that you need to assume an awkward posture to use your glasses at the computer. Mention this to your vision specialist and consider having glasses prescribed that are specifically suited for working with a computer monitor.

Working smarter

1. Take breaks every 30mins of keyboarding and stand at least once per hour
2. For correct keyboarding posture, keep wrists straight and not supported on any surface while typing
3. For correct sitting posture, sit upright or in a slightly reclined posture, maintaining slight hollow in lower back
4. Use your hand to hold telephone receiver or use a headset; do not cradle the receiver
5. Break long periods of continuous computer use with other tasks
6. Ensure the keyboard is placed in the right position to allow you to work comfortably
7. Ensure there is enough space under the desk to allow free movement

Fire Safety

Plan an escape route and make sure everyone knows how to escape

1. Make sure exits are kept clear
2. If safe, the best route is the normal way in and out of your home
3. Think of a second route in case the first one is blocked
4. Keep door and window keys where everyone can find them
5. Take a few minutes to practice your escape plan
6. Review your plan if the layout of your home changes

What to do if there is a fire

1. Don't tackle fires yourself. Leave it to the professionals
2. Keep calm and act quickly and get everyone out as soon as possible
3. Don't waste time investigating what has happened or rescuing valuables
4. If there's smoke, keep low where the air is clearer
5. Before you open a door check if it's warm. If it is, don't open it – fire may be on the other side
6. Call '000' as soon as you're clear of the building

Reporting Incidents

The normal requirements of incident reporting and investigation apply to incidents which occur whilst working from home:

1. Notify your manager as soon as possible after the incident
2. Log incident details within 24 hours of the incident occurring.

Smoke Free Environment

As stated in the Smoke Free Environment Standard, you must not smoke in, around or in an area adjacent to any workplace, and this includes the home based office and areas accessed whilst working from home, like the kitchen and toilets.

Drugs and Alcohol

As stated in the Use of Alcohol Drugs and Other Substances Standard, you are not to consume alcohol or consume, possess or sell illegal drugs and/or other illegal substances while working from home.