

Display screen equipment risk assessment form (guidance notes)

The Display Screen Equipment Regulations 1992

The main provisions apply to display screen equipment (DSE) users, defined as workers who habitually use a computer as a significant part of their normal work. This includes people who are regular users of DSE equipment, or rely on it as part of their job. This covers you if you use DSE for periods of an hour or more continuously, and/or you are making daily use of DSE.

Employers are required to:

- Make a risk assessment of workstation use by DSE users, and reduce the risks identified.
- Ensure DSE users take adequate breaks.
- Provide regular eyesight tests.
- Provide health and safety information and training.
- Provide adjustable furniture (desk, chair, etc).
- Demonstrate that they have adequate procedures designed to reduce risks (such as 'repetitive strain injury') associated with DSE work.

How can I make my workstation safe to use?

This advice is based on the Display Screen Equipment (DSE) Regulations, and good practice:

Adjustable equipment. You must be able to adjust your workstation including your desk, screen, chair, document holder, foot-rest etc. Adjust it to your personal needs. Office equipment is still built for a standard-sized man, and is not downwardly adjustable for most women or those of smaller stature. If you have problems you need to explain them to your supervisor or safety representative.

Hot-desking is a common working practice. If you share your desk, readjust it before you log on. You could enter a DSE checklist on your screen and follow it before you start work.

Taking a break. The DSE Regulations say that employers '**should allow their employees time to take breaks away from the workstation and telephone, and the accompanying mental and physical stresses**'. Both the length of break times and their frequency are equally important. Breaks can range from doing other non-computer tasks to completely stopping work. The DSE Regulations do not define 'break time' in terms of minutes every hour. In general, short frequent breaks are better than one or two longer breaks.

Take exercise breaks after a prolonged spell of typing and using a mouse. Stretching aids blood flow and helps break up the effects of static postures.

Some frequently asked questions

Am I entitled to a free eye test?

Yes, you can request a free eye test if you are classified as a user.

Employers have a duty, under the Display Screen Equipment Regulations, to offer regular DSE users eyesight tests on request when they start DSE work with the organisation and follow-up tests at regular intervals, and to pay for the cost of basic corrective spectacles.

Your 'blink rate' drops the longer you use a computer. Your eyes are less well lubricated, and are likely to become dry and sore. It is important to remember to maintain a normal blink rate when using a computer. Frequent rest breaks, and work away from DSE equipment, gives eyes a chance to recover.

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What should my employer do to prevent Repetitive Strain Injury (RSI)?

Employers have a statutory duty to carry out a risk assessment of any hazardous task or equipment, and consult their workforce. This applies to your workstation, also known as display screen equipment (DSE). DSE work and poor ergonomics can increase the risk of Repetitive Strain Injury.

Employers must follow the advice set out in the Guidance on the regulations for the Display Screen Equipment (DSE) Regulations L26.

Do I have the right to take a break?

Yes.

The DSE Regulations say that employers '**should allow their employees time to take breaks away from the workstation and telephone, and the accompanying mental and physical stresses**'. Both the length of break times and their frequency are equally important. Breaks can range from doing other non-computer tasks to completely stopping work. The DSE Regulations do not define break time in terms of minutes every hour.

How should I adjust my workstation?

This advice is based on the HSE booklet **Work With Display Screen Equipment: Guidance on regulations L26**. ISBN 0-7176-2582-6. £8.95.

Good practice includes:

- Adjust your chair height to a position that allows your arms to be parallel with the floor when you type. If you cannot now comfortably place your feet flat on the floor, you will either need a foot-rest, or a higher desk. Your employer should provide this.
- Adjust the angle and height of your back-rest. It should support your lower back. Adjust the tilt of your seat so that your body is inclined slightly forwards. This encourages you to sit upright, and keep your back straight.
- Adjust your screen position, so that your eyes look down on it from an angle of around 15 to 20 degrees (slightly below eye level).
- Adjust the viewing angle of the screen to minimise reflections and glare. If this proves impossible you may need to address any problems with natural or artificial lighting e.g. fit blinds to windows or use a screen filter.
- Adjust your keyboard, so that your desk supports your wrists and forearms, and the angle feels comfortable during use.
- Arrange your desk and equipment to minimise the amount of bending, twisting and stretching. Keep the area around and underneath your desk clear to allow you enough room to change position regularly.
- If you spend a lot of time reading from source documents or copy typing, place a document holder beside the screen.
- Take regular breaks. A leading call centre employer allows regular DSE users to have a 10-minute break away from the screen every two hours.
- Take exercise breaks after a prolonged spell of typing and using a mouse. Stretching aids blood flow, and helps break up the effects of static postures.

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I share a desk, what should I do?

Hot-desking is a common working practice, in for example call centres.

If you share your desk, readjust your chair and desk before you start work. It is vital that at workstations where hot-desking is the norm that the equipment offers a wide range of adjustments to offer those using it to find a comfortable working position.

If you normally work at the same desk, then you could install a DSE checklist on your screen or pin it up and follow it before you start work. You should be able to spend time getting your desk set up properly in your employer's time, not be expected to come in early to make it safe and comfortable.

Do safety regulations apply when I work at home?

Yes. The risks of developing a work-related injury to hands, wrists, arms, neck and back through using ill-adjusted equipment at home are high. Your employer has a duty to apply the Display Screen Equipment (DSE) Regulations. Even if you work on your own behalf, you should still comply with them.

When using a laptop always ensure it is used on a workstation at the correct height, use a comfortable adaptable chair and adopt good posture at all times.

Laptops are primarily designed for short term use. Docking stations, separate keyboards and mice should be used if a laptop is to be used for frequent or prolonged use. This enables the laptop user to adjust the workstation in a manner most comfortable for them.

Further Information

The Health & Safety Executive (HSE)

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/hthdir/noframes/DSE.htm>

Free HSE publications:

Working With VDUs

Offers basic advice for people who use VDUs at work.

Single copies are free and can be downloaded from the website (ref. INDG36(rev2)) or by calling publications on 01787 881 165. A pack of ten is available for a small cost, by contacting the HSE and quoting ISBN 0-7176-2222-3.

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg36.pdf>

HSE priced publications

Work with Display Screen Equipment: Guidance on regulations

Ref. L26. ISBN 0-7176-2582-6. Price £8.95.

Gives detailed legal guidance and includes the text of the regulations.

The Law on VDUs: An easy guide

Ref. HS(G)90. ISBN 0-7176-2602-4. Price £8.50.

Gives illustrated practical guidance, with a checklist, on how to comply with the Regulations. Aimed primarily at employers whose staff use VDUs in the workplace.

Safe and Healthy Working partners

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