

Independent Guide

Display screen equipment (DSE)

risk assessment - why is it important?



Independent workplace compliance

The use of display screen equipment (DSE) means using devices or equipment that has an alphanumeric or graphic display screen. These are extensively used in the office environment. As part of any good safety management system, it is necessary for risk assessments to be conducted on the use of display screen equipment, to make sure of compliance with legislation and to reduce any risks which may arise from the use of DSE to the user.

Why is it so important?

It is widely accepted that the main risks associated with working with display screen equipment (DSE) are musculoskeletal upper limb disorders (ULDs), for example back pain, and upper limb disorders, visual fatigue and stress. Generally, the risks to individual users are relatively low in the short term; however, they can become significant in the long term if best practice is not followed. Where best practice is followed, for example a correctly set up workstation and taking regular breaks, ULDs can be avoided.

Legislation

The piece of legislation covering display screen equipment is the Health and Safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regulations 1992. These regulations came into force in 1993, with the intention to implement the European directive on the minimum requirements for work with display screen equipment.

Do I need a display screen equipment risk assessment?

One of the requirements of the display screen equipment regulations is to perform a display screen equipment risk assessment. Every employer should perform a suitable and sufficient risk analysis of all employees who fall under the requirement of the regulations. A suitable and sufficient analysis would be one that should identify any hazards and then evaluate the risks.

A typical workstation assessment would comprise of assessing the environment, the equipment, the operator and the computer interface. Each element would look at specific parts of the workstation such as the monitor, keyboard, mouse, desk, temperature, humidity, software and a host of other areas to ensure compliance with the regulations.

Who should do the assessments?

Providing individuals are competent and properly trained, conducting a display screen equipment risk assessment is a relatively straightforward process. Any training should make sure that the trainee is made aware of the main requirements of the display screen equipment regulations and is able to identify hazards. Additionally, the assessor should be able to draw upon additional sources of information, make conclusions, be able to make clear records of the assessment and communicate the findings to those who need to take action, as well as recognising their own limitations.

Do the regulations apply to laptops and tablets?

Yes, only if in prolonged use for work purposes. Those habitually using portable DSE should be trained in how to minimise the risks.

Do the regulations apply to those working at home?

Yes, depending on the % of a working week measures proportionate to risk should be in place. This may include provision of a desk, chair and monitor and employees should have the training to set up their workstation and recognise issues.

References

Health and Safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regulations 1992 as amended by the Health and Safety (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2002. (L26) Guidance on Regulations.

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