

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 and graphic display screen. These are extensively used in office environments and at home. 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 and subsequent injuries 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 good practice is not followed. Where good 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, the working pattern 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 and risks. 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. They should seek additional specialist advice when needed.

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. If employees work at home long term or routinely split their time between home and the workplace. This may include provision of a desk, chair and monitor and employees should have the training to set up their workstation and recognise issues. A homeworker's DSE assessment is required if a person is contracted to work from home.

References

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

This guide is of a general nature; specific advice can be obtained from Assurity Consulting. Assurity Consulting is the UK's leading independent compliance consultancy specialising in workplace health, safety and environmental solutions. We have over 35 years' experience of helping customers of all sizes, from across all sectors, manage their compliance responsibilities, making sure that their organisation is compliant, their employees are safe, their processes are cost effective and their management team is in control.



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