

Display Screen Equipment

Introduction

This Guidance Note has been written to give practical information on display screen equipment (DSE) work.

Legal requirements

Employers and self employed are required to assess the risks associated with display screen work, provide suitable workstations, devise procedures to minimise the risks, and ensure that the health of their employees is monitored (in this case by providing regular eye tests).

Possible health problems associated with display screen work include:

- **upper limb disorders** - the term given to a group of conditions some DSE users may develop. Upper limb disorders can affect the fingers, wrist, arm, shoulder, neck and the back. Although most cases are not persistent, some people experience severe symptoms.
- **eyestrain and headaches** - users may experience eyestrain, particularly when using DSE for extended periods. For some users eyestrain may be accompanied by headaches. Although short-term effects are well documented research has found no evidence that DSE work causes lasting damage to eyesight.
- **stress** - often accompanies the problems already mentioned. Unrealistic workloads and poorly designed workstations are thought to lead to stress. Addressing these issues would help relieve the problem.
- **radiation** - there has been some concern over the levels of radiation emitted by Visual Display Units (VDU screens), particularly in relation to pregnant women. Research has found no links between electromagnetic radiation from VDUs and actual health effects. Government health advisers stress that radiation levels are well below internationally recognised safe limits and no protective measures are required.

What is Display Screen Equipment?

Display screen equipment is the term given to visual display equipment.

A case heard before the European Court of Justice has widened the scope of equipment that comes under the regulations.

As well as desktop monitors, display screen equipment (DSE) also includes screens used in work with television/film pictures, CCTV screens, non electronic display screens for microfiche and flat screen monitors such as fitted to laptop computers.

The following are not considered to be display screen equipment:

- drivers' cabs or control cabs for vehicles or machinery
- DSE onboard a means of transport

- DSE mainly intended for public use
- portable systems not in prolonged use
- calculators, cash registers or any equipment that has a small display required for direct use of the equipment
- window typewriters.

When do the Regulations apply?

The Regulations are aimed at ensuring employers take steps to ensure they control the health risks their employees are exposed to when they use DSE. **If an employer has staff who are “users” then the Regulations will apply.** Users are usually employees who:

- use DSE for periods of an hour or more at a time
- use DSE for such periods on a daily basis
- have to transfer data rapidly to or from the screen and also have to apply a high degree of concentration and attention; or are highly dependent or have little choice regarding the use of the equipment; or need special skills or training.

The **initial assessment** checklist can be utilised to assess if employees/operators are considered ‘users’ (See the first part of the Display Screen Assessment form in the document library)

What do the Regulations Require

Requirements for workstations

Employers are required to conduct **workstation assessments** for staff who are users of DSE. The purpose is to identify and evaluate risks to DSE users. (See the second part of the Display Screen Assessment form in the document library)

Employers also have to ensure that workstations meet the **minimum standards specified in the schedule** to the Regulations as far as they are applicable. A summary of these requirements is listed below:

- sufficient lighting
- no glare or reflections
- minimise noise distractions
- sufficient room underneath workstations to allow change of posture
- windows fitted with adjustable coverings
- suitable software which is easy to use
- work surface of sufficient size and low reflective surface
- stable chair, adjustable in height; chair back adjustable in height and tilt with footrest if required

Reviewing the Assessment

The assessment or relevant parts of it should be reviewed in the light of changes to the DSE worker population, or changes in individual capability, or where there has been some significant change to the workstation such as:

- a major change to software used
- a major change to any of the equipment (screen, keyboard, input devices, etc)
- a major change in workstation furniture
- a substantial increase in the amount of time required to be spent using DSE
- a substantial change in other task requirements (for example greater speed or accuracy)
- if the workstation is relocated (even if all equipment and furniture stays the same)
- if major features of the work environment, such as the lighting, are significantly

- modified.

Eyesight Testing

DSE users are entitled to request an eyesight test that must be paid for by their employers. If the test reveals that the employee requires corrective lenses in order to carry out VDU work, the employer must pay for a basic pair of spectacles. If the user wants a more expensive pair then they must pay the extra amount themselves.

Work Routine

Procedures should be devised to ensure that users do not use DSE for continuous spells that might affect their health.

If the nature of the work does not allow changes of activity then the employer must ensure that breaks can be taken. This is not necessarily a break from work, but from the workstation e.g. filing. There are no set time breaks in the Regulations, but the HSE recommend a 5-10 minute break every hour. Short frequent breaks are more effective than one long break.

It should be noted that the Working Time Regulations 1998 set **minimum** requirements for in-work rest periods. If an employee works for more than six hours they must be permitted to take at least 20 minutes rest. These minimum requirements would run alongside the DSE Regulations ensuring DSE users have at least 20 minutes rest in their working day.

Reference:

- *Health and Safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regulations 1992* implement a European Directive.
- *Health and Safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regulations 1992 as amended by the Health and Safety (Miscellaneous Amendment) Regulations 2002.*

Further Information

- *Work With Display Screen Equipment. Health and Safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regulations 1992 as amended by the Health and Safety (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2002. Guidance on Regulations (L26)*
ISBN 0717625826 £8.95
- *The Law on VDU's: An Easy Guide (HSG 90)*
ISBN 0717626024 £8.50
- *Aching Arms (or RSI) in Small Businesses INDG171*
Free

The above are available from HSE Books: Tel. 01787 881165

- *Ergonomics Requirements for Office Work with Visual Display Terminals (VDTs)*
BS EN ISO 9241 Parts 1 to 17

British Standards can be obtained from the British Standards Institution:
Tel.0208 996 9001

- *Lighting Guide. Areas for Visual Display Units (LG 3: 1989)*
ISBN 0850122422

Available from Chartered Institute of Building Services Engineers:
Tel. 0181 675 5211

- *The Health and Safety (Miscellaneous Amendment) Regulations 2002*
ISBN 0 11 042693 2
Available from the Stationary Office: Tel. 0870 6005522.