

Dawlish Town Council

Policy on Health Risks from Display Screen Equipment

1. Statement of Policy

The Health and Safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regulations 1992 (The DSE Regs.) build upon the general duties contained in the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974. These regulations impose duties on employers aimed at preventing ill-health caused by use of display screen equipment including computer equipment.

Adverse health effects can result from work with display screen equipment. These effects fall into three categories, work related upper limb disorders, visual fatigue and headaches, and fatigue and stress. It is recognised that persons most at risk are those who use display screen equipment as a significant part of their work. For this reason the DSE Regs. apply to “users” as defined. It is also recognised that most adverse health effects are preventable by relatively simple measures as are contained in the Regulations and guidance.

People who use computer equipment only occasionally are not covered by the Regulations, however the Council has a general duty to protect the health and safety of all employees under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974. The measures required by the Regulations, and in particular the minimum requirements for workstations, will therefore be considered as a guide to good practice for occasional users.

Information and training is important and will be provided to “users” as defined in the Regulations. The training and information will include the risks to health and safety and the preventive and protective measures which can be taken to reduce the risks.

2. Organisation and Arrangements

2.1 The Town Clerk

will :-

- Ensure that all new display screen equipment, including computer equipment, conforms with the requirements of the DSE Regulations. See appendix 2 for details of the workstation minimum requirements

for health and safety;

- ensure that existing display screen equipment in use by “users” or “operators” and the area in which the equipment is installed meet the requirements of the DSE Regulations as soon as it is practicable to do so;
- ensure DSE assessments are undertaken for equipment in areas under their control;
- ensure that, for areas under their control, users and operators receive adequate information and training;
- ensure that action is taken to adequately control risks to health and safety identified by the assessment;
- ensure that the daily work routine of users is planned so as to ensure that they have a sufficient number of breaks or changes of activity as may be necessary for reasons of health and safety
- take steps to ensure that health risks to staff from use of DSE are as low as is reasonably practicable.

2.2 Health Safety and Welfare Officer

The Health Safety and Welfare Officer will :-

- ensure that the Council fulfils its legal obligation to conduct and record DSE assessments and to meet the other requirements of the Regulations;
- carry out an analysis of workstations, as appropriate, and an assessment of the risks to health and safety of “users” or “operators”, as defined in the Regulations, who may use the workstations;
- keep records of risk assessments and make reports to persons in control;
- provide information and training to users on the risks to health and the preventive and protective measures which can be taken to reduce the risks;
- on request from a “user”, as defined in the Regulations, make arrangements for that user to have an eye and eyesight test to be paid for by the Council (see appendix 3);

- receive reports from “users” where they experience symptoms of ill-health that they feel may be attributable to use of display screen equipment. The Health Safety and Welfare Officer will keep records of all such reports and will investigate to determine if further preventive or protective action needs to be taken.

2.3 Departmental DSE assessors (where appointed)

Departmental DSE assessors will :-

- work with the manager and staff of their department to conduct and record an analysis of workstations, as appropriate, and an assessment of the risks to health and safety of “users” or “operators”, as defined in the Regulations;
- assist the manager of their department to ensure that all other requirements of the Regulations are met within the department;
- keep records of risk assessments and make reports to the departmental manager, the "user" or "operator" and the Health Safety and Welfare Officer (so that a central record may be kept);
- provide, during the course of a DSE assessment information and training to users on the risks to health and the preventive and protective measures which can be taken to reduce the risks;
- without delay, pass to the Health Safety and Welfare Officer any reports from “users” that they are experiencing symptoms of ill-health that they feel may be attributable to use of display screen equipment. The Health Safety and Welfare Officer will keep records of all such reports and will investigate to determine if further preventive or protective action needs to be taken.

2.4 DSE Users

- will report to the Health Safety and Welfare Officer any symptoms of ill-health that they experience that they feel may be caused by use of display screen equipment;
- will ensure that they take advantage of breaks in activity. Breaks or changes in activity must be incorporated into the working day for DSE “users”. Where DSE use is intensive it is recommended that “users” and “operators” should take frequent short breaks rather than less frequent longer breaks. Users should aim for a break or change of activity of 1 to 2 minutes every 30 minutes unless the nature of the work is such that unplanned interruptions provide sufficient change of activity.

2.4 All employees

- will make proper use of any display screen equipment in accordance either with any health and safety training or instructions that they have received;

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Appendix 1

Definitions

Display screen equipment means any alphanumeric or graphic display screen, regardless of the display process involved. The Regulations apply to display screen equipment with the exception of small displays such as calculators and cash tills and window typewriters.

User means an employee who habitually uses display screen equipment as a significant part of his normal work. Most or all of the following criteria should be satisfied :-

- (a) the individual depends on the use of display screen equipment to do the job, as alternative means are not readily available for achieving the same results;
- (b) the individual has no discretion as to use or non-use of the display screen equipment;
- (c) the individual needs significant training and/or particular skills in the use of display screen equipment;
- (d) the individual normally uses display screen equipment for continuous spells of an hour or more at a time;
- (e) the individual uses display screen equipment in this way more or less daily;
- (f) fast transfer of information between the user and the screen is an important requirement of the job;
- (g) the performance requirements of the system demand high levels of attention and concentration by the user, for example, where the consequences of error may be critical.

Operator means a self-employed person who habitually uses display screen equipment as a significant part of his normal work. Similar criteria as those given above for users can assist in deciding if the definition of an operator applies in individual cases.

Workstation means an assembly comprising :-

- (a) display screen equipment, any input device such as keyboard and software determining the interface between the equipment and its operator or its user;
- (b) any optional accessories to the display screen equipment;
- (c) any disk drive, telephone, modem, printer, document holder, work chair, work desk, work surface or other item peripheral to the display screen equipment;
- (d) the immediate work environment around the display screen equipment.

Appendix 2

Workstation minimum requirements

This appendix reproduces the text of the Schedule to the Health and Safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regulations 1992. Employers must ensure that all new equipment, and from 31st December 1996 all equipment, which is to be used by “users” or “operators” as defined in the regulations must meet these minimum requirements for health and safety.

Extent to which employers must ensure that workstations meet the requirements laid down in this Schedule

1. An employer shall ensure that a workstation meets the requirements laid down in this Schedule to the extent that :-
 - (a) those requirements relate to a component which is present in the workstation concerned;
 - (b) those requirements have effect with a view to securing the health, safety and welfare of persons at work; and
 - (c) the inherent characteristics of a given task make compliance with those requirements appropriate as respects the workstation concerned.

Equipment

2. (a) General comment

The use as such of the equipment must not be a source of risk for operators or users.

- (b) Display screen

The characters on the screen shall be well-defined and clearly formed, of adequate size and with adequate spacing between the characters and lines.

The image on the screen should be stable, with no flickering or other forms of instability.

The brightness and contrast between the characters and the background shall be easily adjustable by the operator or user, and also be easily adjustable to ambient conditions.

The screen must swivel and tilt easily and freely to suit the needs of the operator or user.

It shall be possible to use a separate base for the screen or an adjustable table.

The screen shall be free of reflective glare and reflections liable to cause discomfort to the operator or user.

(c) **Keyboard**

The keyboard shall be tiltable and separate from the screen so as to allow the operator or user to find a comfortable working position avoiding fatigue in the arms or hands.

The space in front of the keyboard shall be sufficient to provide support for the hands and arms of the operator or user.

The keyboard shall have a matt surface to avoid reflective glare.

The arrangement of the keyboard and the characteristics of the keys shall be such as to facilitate the use of the keyboard.

The symbols on the keys shall be adequately contrasted and legible from the design working position.

(d) **Work desk or work surface**

The work desk or work surface shall have a sufficiently large, low-reflectance surface and allow a flexible arrangement of the screen, keyboard, documents and related equipment.

The document holder shall be stable and adjustable and shall be positioned so as to minimise the need for uncomfortable head and eye movements.

There shall be adequate space for operators or users to find a comfortable position.

(e) **Work chair**

The work chair shall be stable and allow the operator or user easy freedom of movement and a comfortable position.

The seat shall be adjustable in height.

The seat back shall be adjustable in both height and tilt.

A footrest shall be made available to any operator or user who wishes one.

Environment

3. (a) **Space requirements**

The workstation shall be dimensioned and designed so as to provide sufficient space for the operator or user to change position and vary movements.

(b) **Lighting**

Any room lighting or task lighting provided shall ensure satisfactory lighting conditions and an appropriate contrast between the screen and the background environment, taking into account the type of work and the vision requirements of the operator or user.

Possible disturbing glare and reflections on the screen or other equipment shall be prevented by co-ordinating workplace and workstation layout with the positioning and technical characteristics of the artificial light sources.

(c) **Reflections and glare**

Workstations shall be so designed that sources of light, such as windows and other openings, transparent or translucent walls, and brightly coloured fixtures or walls cause no direct glare and no distracting reflections on the screen.

Windows shall be fitted with a suitable system of adjustable covering to attenuate the daylight that falls on the workstation.

(d) **Noise**

Noise emitted by equipment belonging to any workstation shall be taken into account when a workstation is being equipped, with a view in particular to ensuring that attention is not distracted and speech is not disturbed.

(e) **Heat**

Equipment belonging to any workstation shall not produce excess heat which could cause discomfort to operators or users.

(f) **Radiation**

All radiation with the exception of the visible part of the electromagnetic spectrum shall be reduced to negligible levels from the point of view of the protection of operators' or users' health and safety.

(g) **Humidity**

An adequate level of humidity shall be established and maintained.

Interface between computer and operator/user

4. In designing, selecting, commissioning and modifying software, and in designing tasks using display screen equipment, the employer shall take into account the following principles:
 - (a) software must be suitable for the task;
 - (b) software must be easy to use and, where appropriate, adaptable to the level of knowledge or experience of the operator or user; no quantitative or qualitative checking facility may be used without the knowledge of the operators or users;
 - (c) systems must provide feedback to operators or users on the performance of those systems;
 - (d) systems must display information in a format and at a pace which are adapted to operators or users;
 - (e) the principles of software ergonomics must be applied, in particular to human data processing.

Appendix 3

Eye tests and spectacles

Eye and eyesight tests will be provided to “users” as defined in the Regulations, on request. In cases where spectacles are required by a “user” specifically for work with DSE, and this has been recommended by an optician, the Council will pay for the spectacles to be provided. The “user” may wish to have spectacles other than the most basic design in which case the Council will make a payment towards the cost. The payment to be made will be £40.

Anyone wishing to have an eye test or spectacles paid for by the Council should contact the Health, Safety and Welfare Officer.