

Health and Safety News

Autumn 2009

This newsletter is issued to our clients to help keep you up to date on current health and safety (H&S) issues as part of our H&S assistance services.



New Health & Safety Law posters and leaflets

Following the introduction of the Health and Safety Information for Employees (Amendment) Regulations 2009 the HSE has published new health and safety law leaflets, as well as new posters that do not require the addition or updating of enforcing authority and Employment Medical Advisory Service (EMAS) contact information by businesses displaying them. The old versions can still be used until the 5th April 2014. The new version of the poster only requires sections to be filled in detailing who the organisation's health and safety representatives are and any other health and safety contacts such as directors designated with responsibility for H&S and advisors. The new posters and leaflets can be purchased from www.hsebooks.com

New first aid guidance

New guidance on the Health and Safety (First Aid) Regulations 1981 has been published. The main changes include the provision of a lower level of competence for first aiders known as Emergency First Aid at Work (EFAW), which is a one day (6-hour) course. The aim of this is to provide organisations with first aiders where an appointed person is not a suitable level of provision but a "full" first aider would be excessive. As with the First Aid at Work (FAW) certificate, the EFAW certificate will be valid for 3 years. This will mean that organisations that currently require first aiders rather than appointed persons may be able to cut their training costs and time off for training but only if the level of competence of EFAW is sufficient for their first aiders; if the assessment of the level of provision requires training to FAW level then simply providing EFAW trained first aiders will not be acceptable. The new guidance also recommends that annual refresher training/skills updates be undertaken by first aiders, but this is just a recommendation and not a requirement. The role of an "appointed person" still exists as in its current form. The guidance is free to download at:



<http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/l74.pdf>

Offices, shops and factories notifications no longer required

With the introduction of the Factories Act 1961 and Offices, Shops and Railway Premises Act 1963 (Repeals and Modifications) Regulations, employers are no longer required to fill out a form to notify HSE or the local authority of any factory, office or shop premises, and certain railway premises, where employees work.



New registration scheme for gas engineers

CORGI is no longer the registering body for gas engineers; it is now the Gas Safe Register, run by Capita. Gas Safe registered engineers should present clients with their identification card featuring the Gas Safe logo. The back of the card will detail the work they are registered to carry out. Further details can be obtained on the HSE's website.

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/gas/domestic/gas-safe-register.htm>

Free HSE publications

The HSE have made many of their priced publications in the "L" and "HSG" series, as well as others, free to download as pdf files from the HSE website:

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/books/index-catalogue.htm>

New COSHH Leaflet

The HSE have published a new guidance leaflet for the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002 (as amended). The new leaflet features the new international hazard identification symbols that will replace the European symbols currently in used and gives practical advice on how to carry out COSHH assessments:

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg136.pdf>

BACK TO BASICS - Display Screen Equipment (DSE) Workstations

Ensure that DSE workstations are set up correctly:

Chairs



- Adjusted so that the user can sit upright with as much support as possible.
- Seat height set so that the user's feet are flat on the floor without excessive pressure on the back of the thighs
- Forearms should be above and parallel to the desk top. This may then determine that a **footrest** is required if the feet are not flat on the floor.
- Chair back height adjusted so that the user's lumbar region is supported and their shoulders relaxed.
- Chairs should be maintained and replaced if adjustment mechanisms no longer function correctly.
- Chair arms must not prevent the user from getting close enough to the desk to use any equipment comfortably or be so high that the shoulders are pushed up above a natural relaxed position.

Screens



- Adjusted so that the top of the screen is roughly level with the user's eyes.
- Positioned approximately arm's length away from the user.
- Positioned directly in front of the user to avoid awkward postures through twisting the neck or body.
- Brightness, contrast, colours and text size should be adjusted to levels that are comfortable for the user.

Keyboard and mouse



- Positioned so that they are easily within reach.
- Keyboard should be positioned directly in front of the user to avoid awkward postures through twisting the neck or body.
- Keyboard – the hands should be in line with the forearms horizontally and vertically and held above the desk. Wrist rests are for use when resting in between typing.
- Mouse – move the arm rather than the hand from the wrist, keep fingers relaxed and take hand off the mouse when it's not being used, even for short periods.

Working environment



- Should be comfortable in terms of heat, noise, light and humidity.
- Lighting should be sufficient.
- Surfaces and display screens should be free from glare and reflections that could cause eye-strain.
- The workstation itself should be kept tidy and uncluttered, particularly cables, bags and boxes etc. under the desk.

Most importantly



- Users should take regular breaks from DSE work by doing an activity where the user can get up and walk about in order to change position and vary work.
- More frequent, shorter breaks from DSE, such as a 10 minute break in every hour, are more effective than longer, less frequent breaks.

CASE STUDY - Make sure you carry out DSE workstation assessments

An employee injured her wrists in a car accident and advised her employer of this. However the employer did not carry out a workstation assessment under the Health and Safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regulations, neither did they give her any training or information about the risks associated with DSE use and how to avoid them, and only temporarily reduced her level of computer use, which soon returned to its previous level. Within 2 years she had been diagnosed with tenosynovitis (inflammation of the sheath around the tendons in the wrist) and a court ruled that by not taking suitable action the company was guilty of aggravating the condition.

P F B Help always available

Often health and safety is a daunting issue and finding the time to do all the things we need to do can be challenging. If you need any assistance or clarification of H&S issues affecting your business then please contact either Paul or James by telephone or email.

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