



OFFICE SAFETY

INTRODUCTION

The following sections provide general guidelines for preventing stress and arranging your workstation.

PREVENTING STRESS

To reduce stress and prevent fatigue, it is important to take mini-breaks (not many breaks) throughout the day. If possible, change tasks at least once every two hours. Stretch your arms, neck, and legs often if you do the same type of work for long periods of time. Rest your eyes often by closing them or looking at something other than the work at hand. For a quick pick-me-up, breathe deeply several times by inhaling through your nose and exhaling through your mouth. In addition, always try to eat your lunch somewhere other than your desk.

Other examples of stress-relieving exercises that can be done at your desk include the following:

Head and Neck Stretch

- Slowly turn your head to the left, and hold it for three seconds.
- Slowly turn your head to the right, and hold it for three seconds.
- Drop your chin gently towards your chest, and then tilt it back as far as you can.
- Repeat these steps five to ten times.

Shoulder Roll

- Roll your shoulders forward and then backward using a circular motion.

Upper Back Stretch

- Grasp one arm below the elbow and pull gently towards the other shoulder.
- Hold this position for five seconds and then repeat with the other arm.

Wrist Wave

- With your arms extended in front of you, raise and lower your hands several times.

Finger Stretch

- Make fists with your hands and hold tight for one second, and then spread your fingers wide for five seconds.

ARRANGEMENT OF YOUR WORKSTATION

Following are some recommendations for ensuring employee comfort through proper workstation set-up.

WORK POSTURE

Your seating position at work is important to your comfort and safety. To reduce the painful effects of repetitive motion, follow these tips when working with computers or typewriters:

- Always sit up straight.
- Make sure your chair is adjusted to provide adequate support to your back.
- Place your feet flat on the floor or on a footrest.
- Lower legs should be approximately vertical, and thighs should be approximately horizontal.
- The majority of your weight should be on the buttocks.
- Ensure that there is at least 1 inch of clearance between the top of your thighs and the bottom of the desk or table.
- Keep your wrists in a natural position. They should not rest on the edge of the desk.
- Keep the front edge of your chair approximately 4 inches behind your knees.

EQUIPMENT SET-UP

By properly arranging your equipment, you can also help reduce the harmful effects of repetitive motion. Following are some tips for arranging office equipment:

Lighting

- Lighting around computer workstations should illuminate the work area without obscuring the video-display terminal (VDT) screen or causing glare.
- Position computer screens, draperies, blinds, and pictures to reduce glare during work hours (e.g., place the VDT screen at a right angle to the window).

VDT Screen

- VDT images should be clear and well defined. Adjust the screen's brightness, contrast and display size to meet your needs. If a screen flickers or jumps, have it repaired or replaced.
- Place the VDT 20-28 inches away from your face. The center of the VDT should be approximately 15 to 25 degrees below your line of vision.

Keyboards

- Position computer keyboards so that the angle between the forearm and upper arm is between 80 and 120 degrees.
- Place the keyboard in an area that is accessible and comfortable.

Wrist Support

- Use wrist supports made of padded material; the support should allow you to type without bending your wrists.

Document Holders

- Keep documents at approximately the same height and distance from your face as the VDT screen.

Telephones

- Neck tension is a common problem caused by holding the telephone between the head and neck. Use a headset or speakerphone if you are on the telephone for extended periods of time.



SAFETY CHECKLIST FOR THE HOME OFFICE

- The space should be adequately ventilated.
- The space should be reasonably quiet and free of distractions.
- All stairs with 4 or more steps should be equipped with handrails.
- All circuit breakers and/or fuses in the electrical panel should be labeled as to intended service.
- Circuit breakers should clearly indicate if they are in open or closed position.
- All electrical equipment should be free of recognized hazards that could cause physical harm (e.g. frayed wires, bare conductors, loose wires, flexible wires running through walls, exposed wires fixed to the ceiling).
- Electrical outlets should be 3 pronged (grounded).
- Computer equipment should be connected to a surge protector.
- Aisles, doorways, and corners should be free of obstructions to permit visibility and movement.
- File cabinets and storage closets should be arranged so drawers and doors do not open into walkways.
- The space should not be crowded with furniture.
- Phone lines, electrical cords and extensions wires should be secured under a desk or alongside baseboard.
- Floor surfaces should be clean, dry, level, and free of worn or frayed seams.
- Carpets should be well secured to the floor, and free of rayed or worn seams.