Frequently Asked Questions
Display Screen Equipment

1. What are the DSE Regulations?

The Health and Safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regulations 1992 as amended by the Health and Safety (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2000 are designed to ensure that computers and other display screen equipment is set up and used in such a way as to prevent ill-health or injury.

2. What does DSE mean?

DSE or Display Screen Equipment is sometimes known as a VDU or Visual Display Unit, it's basically the computer, monitor, mouse, keyboard, chair and all the other pieces of equipment that make up your workstation. It also includes laptops if you use them for a significant period of time.

3. Why risk assess?

Display screen risk assessment will help ensure that your workstation is designed to fit you minimising the chances of any ergonomic problems such as a bad back or sore wrists developing. A risk assessment will also help you understand how to set up and use your workstation effectively.

4. Am I at risk?

DSE have been blamed – often wrongly – for a wide range of health problems. Where problems do occur, they are generally caused by the way in which DSE is being used or the way the DSE is set up, rather than DSE themselves.

5. When do I need a risk assessment?

If you are a ‘user’ you should have a DSE assessment before you start work. If you have not had an assessment and you regularly work with DSE contact your manager.

6. Can work with DSE affect my eyesight?

Extensive research has found evidence that DSE does not cause disease or permanent damage to your eyes. But long spells of DSE work can lead to tired eyes and discomfort.

7. Am I entitled to an eye and eyesight test?

If you use or habitually use DSE then you are entitled to an appropriate eye and eyesight test, at your request. Caerphilly CBC is obligated to meet the cost of your eye test. If you are prescribed ‘special’ corrective appliances for work specifically with DSE then Caerphilly CBC must pay for these appliances.

8. Can DSE work cause headaches?

Headaches may result from several things that occur with DSE work, such as;

- Screen glare,
- Poor image quality,
- A need for different spectacles,
- Stress from the pace of work,
- Reading the screen for long periods without a break,
- Poor posture, or
- A combination of these things.

Many of these things can easily put right once the cause of the problem has been identified through the display screen risk assessment.

9. How long should I work with DSE?

There is no legal limit, but you need to break up long spells of DSE work. How long you should work without a break depends on the type of work you are doing. Most jobs provide opportunities to take a break from the screen, e.g. to do photocopying. Make use of them. If there are no such natural breaks in your job, your manager should plan for you to have rest breaks or frequent short breaks. Frequent short breaks are better then fewer long ones.

10. Does DSE give out harmful radiation?

No. DSE gives out visible light, which enables us to see the screen, and other forms of electromagnetic radiation, which can be harmful above certain levels. However, the levels of radiation emitted from DSE are well below the safe levels set out in international recommendations.

11. What should I do if I'm pregnant?

You do not need to stop work with DSE. However you must inform your manager so a risk assessment can be carried out, as certain aspects of your work affect your pregnancy.

If you are anxious about your DSE or about working generally during pregnancy, you should talk to your doctor.

12. What if I use a laptop?

The design of laptops can include features (such as smaller keyboards) that may make it more difficult to achieve a comfortable working posture. Therefore its vital that a DSE assessment address this and that guidance is given on how to minimise risk. e.g. ensuring a docking station is issued wherever possible, ensuring the laptop is positioned on a flat surface and taking regular breaks etc.

13. Where can I get further information?

You can get further information from your Directorate Health and Safety Officer, telephone the HSE Infoline on 08701 545500 or you can access the following web site. You must have external Internet access to view this site:

- http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/index.htm

The following documents may also provide you with further information:

- The Health and Safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regulations 1992 as amended by the Health and Safety (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2000
- Caerphilly County Borough Council Display Screen Equipment Policy

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