

## Health and Safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regulations 1992

### Definitions within the Regulations

**DISPLAY SCREEN EQUIPMENT (DSE)** means any alphanumeric or graphic display screen, commonly referred to as VDU, monitor, word processor etc.

**WORKSTATION (WS)** means an assembly comprising-

- DSE, with or without a keyboard, software or input device
- optional accessories
- disk drives, telephone, modem, printer, work holder
- work desk, work chair, work surface
- the immediate work environment.

**USER** means an employee who habitually uses DSE as a significant part of their normal work, being someone-

- having no choice but to use DSE
- using it for continuous spells of more than one hour, on a more or less daily basis
- being involved in fast transfer of information
- being required to pay a high level of attention.

The guidance suggests that word processing pool workers, personal secretaries, data input users, accounts and directory enquiry operators, graphic designers and some librarians would qualify as (habitual) users, but casual users such as managers and receptionists would not.

**OPERATOR** means the self-employed who work at a client's WS and whose use of DSE is equal to that of (habitual) user (e.g. 'temps'). Exemptions include DSE in connection with

- drivers cabs or control cabs for vehicles or machinery
- DSE on board means of transport
- DSE mainly intended for public use
- portable systems not in prolonged use
- calculators, cash registers and small displays related to use of equipment
- window typewriters.

The regulations extend to microfiche systems but not to film or television viewing unless the main use is to display alphanumeric text or graphics. It would, however, extend to the habitual use of CCTV cameras by, for example, controllers and security personnel.

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**ANALYSIS (Regulation 2):** Employers shall suitably and sufficiently analyse workstation to assess the risks to H&S of any (habitual) user or operator, and reduce the risk to the lowest extent reasonably practicable. Annex B to the guidance outlines the possible defects on health under the heading of upper limb disorders, eye and eyesight defects, fatigue and stress. It also provides information on risks related to epilepsy, facial dermatitis, radiation defects and pregnancy. The guidance also aligns the task of analysis with that of risk assessment under the MHSW Regulations and provides detailed guidelines (Annex A).

**WORKSTATIONS (Regulation 3):** Any workstation shall meet the requirements laid down in the schedule to the regulations.

**DAILY ROUTINE (Regulation 4):** The work routine of (habitual) users shall periodically be interrupted by breaks or changes of activity to reduce their workload on DSE. The guidance acknowledges that natural breaks or pauses occur in the organisation of work, and no set formula for frequency or duration of breaks is offered. However, it states that a 5-10 minute break after 50-60 minutes is preferable to a 15 minute break every 2 hours. It suggests that users should be given some discretion but not to the extent that they opt for a shorter working day in lieu of breaks.

**PROTECTION OF EYES AND EYESIGHT (Regulation 5):** Upon request, employees have the right to an eye and eyesight test conducted by a competent person where they –

- are already users
- before becoming users
- at regular intervals thereafter
- if experiencing visual difficulties which could be caused by work on DSE.

The guidance points out that whilst there is no reliable evidence that work with DSE damages eyes or eyesight, it may make users with pre-existing vision defects more aware of them. An 'eye and eyesight test' under UK law means a 'sight test' under the Opticians Act 1989, which can only be carried out by a registered ophthalmic optician or suitably qualified medical practitioner. A vision screening test may suffice to identify any need for a full sight test, but the employer cannot refuse a request for a full eye and eyesight test from the onset if the user requests it.

Employers shall provide special corrective appliances appropriate for the work where

- normal corrective appliances cannot be used
- tests show such provision to be necessary.

The guidance states that the employer is liable for the costs of special corrective appliances to the extent of a style and quality adequate for its function. If users choose more costly appliances, or correction for distances other than for DSE viewing distances, then the employer pays only an appropriate proportion. 'Normal' corrective appliances are at the user's own expense. Employers are free to specify that users' tests and correction appliances are provided by a particular company or professional.

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**TRAINING (Regulation 6):** Employers shall provide adequate H&S training to persons who are already users or who will become users within the undertaking, and following any re-organisation of the workstation.

*NB The guidance suggests the following topics:*

- *recognition of hazards and risks*
- *causes of risk (e.g. poor posture)*
- *what the user can do to correct them*
- *referring problems to management information on the regulations*
- *the user's role in assessments.*

*It is further suggested that posters or cards illustrating the essential points, particularly on posture, be displayed near a workstation.*

**INFORMATION (Regulation 7):** Habitual users shall be provided with adequate information on H&S aspects relating to their WS and the measures taken by the employer to comply with the regulations (insofar as those measures relate to that habitual user or their work).