

**Information Paper for the Legislative Council
Manpower Panel Meeting
on 25 November 1999**

**Occupational Safety and Health
(Display Screen Equipment) Regulation**

Background

With the growing use of computers at work, more and more employees are spending a considerable part of their working hours working with computers. Coupled with this growth, there is an increasing trend of such employees encountering health problems. Examples include upper limb pains and discomfort, back discomfort and eyestrain. These health problems are closely related to the design of workstations, working posture, working environment and work organization.

2. In the light of the problem, we propose to introduce the Occupational Safety and Health (Display Screen Equipment) Regulation (the proposed Regulation) to govern the occupational safety and health of employees exposed to the risks associated with the habitual use of display screen equipment (DSE).

Coverage of the proposed Regulation

3. The main focus of the proposed Regulation is DSE used for showing letters, numbers, characters or graphics. This would include conventional electronic display, whether based on cathode ray tube displays, flat panels or any other display technology, as well as microfiche and microfilm viewers.

4. In terms of coverage, the proposed Regulation covers workstations in use for or in connection with work in office, factories or other workplaces covered under the Occupational Safety and Health Ordinance. These are assemblies comprising DSE, any items peripheral to the DSE, e.g. chair, desk, work surface, printer, etc., and the immediate working environment around the DSE. Such working environment includes lighting, acoustics, temperature and humidity.

5. Insofar as employees are concerned, the proposed Regulation only covers those who are habitually using DSE as a significant part of their normal work (the users), for example, word processing operators, computer graphic designers, data input operators, financial dealers, etc. These DSE users are usually highly dependent on the use of DSE in their job, and are more vulnerable to the risks associated with habitual use of DSE.

6. However, the proposed Regulation will not apply to the following DSE applications, which normally pose minimal health risks to employees :

- (a) DSE which is used mainly to show pictures, television or films;
- (b) driver's cabs or control cabs for vehicles or machinery;
- (c) DSE on board a means of public transport;
- (d) portable systems not in prolonged use;
- (e) calculators, cash registers or any equipment having a small data or measurement display required for direct use of the equipment; or
- (f) window typewriters.

Proposed Provisions

A. Duties of employers

Risk assessment

7. An employer is required to perform a risk assessment of a workstation which is used by users. The assessment serves to identify and evaluate the associated potential risks so that appropriate measures can be taken to safeguard the health of the users.

8. Recording the findings of a risk assessment is essential for future reference. An employer is required to keep such record as long as the workstation, of which the assessment is performed, is being used by users. He is also required to produce the record to an occupational safety officer for inspection upon request.

9. An employer is also required to review the risk assessment if there has been a significant change in the workstation or in the conditions, like the

working environment, the furniture, the hardware devices, etc., of a previous assessment. The assessment record should also be revised accordingly.

Risk reduction

10. On identifying any risks in an assessment, an employer should take steps to reduce the risks to the lowest extent as is reasonably practicable, e.g. replacing unsuitable furniture and equipment, modifying the working environment and work practices, etc.

Provision of information

11. An employer is required to inform users about the findings of the risk assessment and the actions he has taken after the assessment.

Requirements for workstation

12. Providing a suitable workstation is important for securing the safety, health and welfare of the users. An employer should ensure that the workstation meets the general ergonomic requirements so far as reasonably practicable.

Safety and health training

13. An employer should provide adequate safety and health training for the users. Whenever the organization of a workstation in which the users normally work is substantially modified, adequate safety and health training in respect of the modification should also be provided to them.

B. Responsibility of users

14. A user should co-operate with his employer by following any system of work and work practices established for the safety and health of users at his workplace.

C. Offences

15. Upon conviction for contravening the provisions of the proposed Regulation, the maximum levels of fines are \$50,000 for an employer and \$10,000 for a user.

Way Forward

16. We plan to introduce the proposed Regulation into the Legislative Council in early 2000 and it should come into operation 12 months after enactment. This would allow sufficient time for employers and employees to prepare themselves for their new obligations. The Labour Department will also provide employers and employees with guidance on compliance with the new requirements.

Education and Manpower Bureau
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