



# Screen-Based Work organising and health & safety

## What is screen-based work?

Screen-based work involves working with equipment that has a self-illuminating screen for displaying information. The same level of protection should be provided for screen-based work involving portable computers as for workstation-based computers.

## What is the responsibility of employers?

Employers must

- consult with employees and OHS representatives
- provide adequate and appropriate information, training, instruction and supervision
- identify, assess and control hazards associated with screen-based work
- provide an appropriate physical and organisational environment
- provide healthy and safe workplaces and work systems, including screen-based equipment.

## Organising to prevent injury and disease

Workers should

- meet to discuss causes, effects and possible solutions to injury and disease caused by screen-based work – see *ACTU Guidelines for Screen Based Work* at <http://www.actu.asn.au/public/papers/screen.html>
- collectively determine how to achieve a healthy and safe workplace.

Your health and safety representative and committee, or your union delegate, should be involved.

Health and safety representatives and union delegates should

- ensure that all workers know that they have the right to refuse work likely to endanger them
- collect evidence of the problem – for example, talk to workers, do a survey
- meet with the employer

- seek control of hazards at source
- develop a prevention policy in consultation with workers and management
- include screen-based work in enterprise agreements
- contact the union or OHS inspectors if necessary.

If an employer will not act on health and safety issues, OHS representatives in some states and territories can issue provisional improvement notices (PINs). These are official notices to an employer that a health and safety issue exists and needs to be fixed.

Health and safety inspectors may direct employers to fix problems in the workplace and may issue prohibition or improvement notices.

## The following should be examined.

### Job Design

Are the total time and the length of continuous periods spent at screen-based work limited?

Are jobs designed to

- reduce repetitive tasks
- provide workers with control over the organisation of their work
- avoid excessive demands on workers' abilities and skills?

Is electronic monitoring of screen-based work (for example, stroke rates or error rates) used to pace workers or to assess their performance?

Are there incentive schemes linked to high stroke rates?

Are there recuperative hourly rest breaks, over and above regular meal and health breaks?

Are there congenial rest areas, convenient to, but separate from, the screen-based workstation?

### Training

Are workers provided with training in

- recognising, identifying and reporting hazards
- safe work practices

## Screen-Based Work

- the correct adjustment of ergonomic furniture
- the avoidance of inappropriate postures
- the appropriate use of rest breaks?

### Lighting

Is the lighting environment for screen-based work suitable for both reading of hard copy and screen-based work?

Is glare avoided?

Is an assessment made of the suitability of lighting before portable computers or other LCD screens are introduced?

### Air Quality

Is the air in the workplace clean and fresh and at a comfortable temperature and humidity?

### Noise

Have noise levels been tested?

### Workstation

Is the workstation large enough to accommodate

- the screen, keyboard and associated equipment
- all other tasks undertaken
- the resting of hands and arms?

Is the workstation large enough to permit easy reach of items regularly used?

Is the work surface for screen-based work even, unbroken and height adjustable?

Do chairs

- provide efficient body support
- allow relaxed and non-restricted muscle function and changes in posture
- enable the operator's arms to be left free for unsupported keyboard function?

Is it possible to easily adjust the height of the chair and the position of the backrest while seated on the chair?

Does screen-based equipment comply with Australian design standards for electric shock, fire and heat, as well as mechanical, radiation or chemical hazards?

Is the equipment mechanically stable and structurally sound, with no sharp edges?

Are dangerous parts adequately guarded?

Is the display unit separate from the keyboard, adjustable for height above the desk and for forward and backward tilt and swivel?

Do keyboards, mouse units and other input devices comply with Australian design standards?

### Electrical and magnetic fields (EMFs)

Is exposure to EMFs monitored?

Are people who are considering parenting permitted to move to duties away from sources of electromagnetic fields?

### Eye Testing

Is an initial vision and eye assessment for screen-based workers carried out by an optometrist or ophthalmologist acceptable to both employees and management?

Are additional vision and eye assessments carried out

- whenever workers experience discomfort or ill health associated with their screen-based work
- at intervals not exceeding two years?

Are workers whose vision needs correction to perform screen-based work provided with corrective devices?

Does the employer bear the costs of tests, professional consultants and corrective eyewear?