

Display Screen Equipment		
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Policy Overview

TAC recognises its duty to ensure the well-being of workers who habitually use display screen equipment (DSE) for a significant part of their work and they are advised to take a five minute break from the DSE at least once an hour. If they experience vision issues/other discomfort that they believe may be wholly/partly a consequence of their use of DSE, they have the right to an eye-test at TAC's expense. Some workers may experience upper limb problems/backache from over or improper use of DSE. These can also be experienced from poorly designed workstations or work environments and the causes may not always be obvious. Appropriate seating for computer users must be provided.

An employer must protect its workers from the health risks of working with display screen equipment (DSE), such as PCs, laptops, tablets and smartphones.

The Health and Safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regulations apply to workers who use DSE daily, for an hour or more at a time. The HSE describes these workers as 'DSE users'. The regulations don't apply to workers who use DSE infrequently or only use it for a short time.

How to protect workers' health

In law, employers must:

- do a DSE workstation assessment
- reduce risks, including making sure workers take breaks from DSE work or do something different
- provide an eye test if a worker asks for one
- provide training and information for workers

Incorrect use of DSE or poorly designed workstations or work environments can lead to pain in necks, shoulders, backs, arms, wrists and hands as well as fatigue and eye strain. The causes may not always be obvious.

The law applies if users are, for example:

- at a fixed workstation
- mobile workers
- home workers

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- hot-desking (workers should carry out a basic risk assessment if they change desks regularly)
- 2. Workstations and assessment
- If workers use display screen equipment (DSE) daily, as part of their normal work, continuously for an hour or more, employers must do a workstation assessment.

Employers should look at:

- the whole workstation, including equipment, furniture, and work conditions
- the job being done
- any special requirements of a member of staff, for example a user with a disability
- Where there are risks, they should take steps to reduce them.

Employers must also do an assessment when:

- a new workstation is set up
- a new user starts work
- a change is made to an existing workstation or the way it's used
- users complain of pain or discomfort
- Use this DSE workstation checklist to help make an assessment.

Work routine and breaks

The law says employers must plan work so there are breaks or changes of activity for employees who are display screen equipment (DSE) users.

There is no legal guidance about how long and how often breaks should be for DSE work. It depends on the kind of work you are doing. Take short breaks often, rather than longer ones less often. For example 5 to 10 minutes every hour is better than 20 minutes every 2 hours. Ideally, users should be able to choose when to take breaks.

In most jobs it is possible to stop DSE work to do other tasks, such as going to meetings or making phone calls. If there are no natural changes of activity in a job, employers should plan rest breaks.

Breaks or changes of activity should allow users to get up from their workstations and move around, or at least stretch and change posture.