TRAVELERS

Risk Control guide: remote working

General

In response to COVID-19, a lot of businesses now have staff working remotely. Some employees regularly work from home or away from an office environment, but for many, this will be a new experience that will require some adjustment and consideration.

Risk assessment

Managers should engage with remote workers when reviewing potential hazards to determine whether control measures are adequate. A homeworker checklist can help with the assessment process. The Institute of Occupational Safety and Health website has guidance that includes a useful checklist.

Training

Working remotely may present new challenges for some employees. It is important that employees have some training to build their understanding of how to work from home effectively. If employers are unable to provide training themselves, the British Safety Council can provide online courses for homeworkers.

Workspace and equipment

In a temporary homeworking situation, people may not have the perfect environment in which to work. Encourage employees to create a workspace where there is enough space and light, and ideally separate their work and living areas, for a more positive experience.

Employees should be provided with the right equipment to complete their work, and it should be set up correctly and well maintained. Employees should report any defects to their employer.

Further information about workspace and equipment can be found in guidance from the Health and Safety Executive.

Ergonomics

It is important for employees to adopt good ergonomic practices, even when they are not in a traditional office environment. Ergonomic risk from working at a computer can be reduced with proper posture, good work habits and appropriately adjusted equipment. Travelers has produced a guide on ergonomics in the workplace.

Well being

Prolonged remote working can affect health and wellbeing. When combined with other uncertainties presented by COVID-19, this issue should not be underestimated.

It is essential that there is regular communication between employers and employees. Employers should foster both social and professional interaction. Employers should encourage:

- Employees to plan their day so that it includes intervals to break up desk-based work.
- Self-care, including regular exercise and a healthy diet.
- Communication and support, including the use of internal and external resources. This can include partnering with the HR team, third-party employee assistance programmes or groups such as professionally-trained mental health and fitness specialists.

Further information for employers and employees can be found at:
Health and Safety Executive
Mental Health at Work
Safety & Health Practitioner