DEVELOPING AN OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY PLAN FOR SMALL BUSINESSES AND ORGANISATIONS

Working Across Cultures
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Preface

This guide to the Development of an Occupational Health and Safety Plan for Small Businesses and Organisations was developed in the context of the Project “Working Across Cultures: building a healthy workplace through training in intercultural communication, a worker representation and empowerment”. This multifaceted project, funded through the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work, The Austrian Health Promotion Fund, and the County Government of Styria, was carried out by OMEGA Health Care Center Graz, between October 2003 and September 2004.

Together with the forgoing project (2002-2003) “Multicultural Health at Work – Migrants and Marginalised Groups”, the goals of the project were:

- To identify the specific stress factors in work with refugees, migrants and marginalised groups and in a multicultural work team
- To find strategies for the reduction, prevention and of such stress factors
- To identify corresponding measures to improve health and safety in our own workplace
- To make available the gathered knowledge to other organisations and thereby make a contribution to the successful work with and for multicultural and marginalised clients and in multicultural work teams.

For the current Project, as well as the development of a guide for Occupational Health and Safety for small businesses and Organisations, other activities included the preparation of a training manual in intercultural communication, training in intercultural communication and conflict resolution for staff and others, and the advice to other non Government and Government Institutions providing services to multicultural clients.

This guide to the Development of an Occupational Health and Safety Plan for Small Businesses and Organisations is available in English and German, both by direct contact with OMEGA Health Care Centre and its Homepage for downloading, and on a CD containing a range of products relating to the Project.

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[Logos of European Agency for Safety and Health at Work, Gesundes Österreich, and Steiermark]
1. Introduction

Defining a Healthy Company - the principles of a healthy company include: a safe working environment; healthy working practices; programs to promote health and to address psychosocial risk factors at the workplace; health impact assessment for marketed products; and contribution to health and social development in the community. (WHO Glossary of Health Promotion Terminology)

Of course many smaller companies and organisations have not the resources to achieve this grand vision of a Healthy Company. However all organisations, even those with limited resources can achieve an important basic requirement, which is a plan for health and safety within the workplace, using minimal resources and maximal management and staff commitment. This manual is meant as a guide to achieving this goal.

Although thousands of workers die each year worldwide, and many, more suffer injury or illness from conditions at work, small companies and non profit Organisations may rarely experience the more severe consequences of work related illness and injury. For this reason, many such Organisations consider formal health and safety arrangements not relevant to them or beyond their financial and human resources. However all workplaces carry hazards and risks which may result at some stage in serious accidents or which may be a continual but imperceptible health burden for employees. The consequences of continual noise, the stress resulting from unclear work practices, the ergonomic risks from poorly designed workplaces, can in the long term result in absenteeism and poor staff health and well-being in general. A commitment to workplace health and safety begins with a commitment to the health and well being of all staff and to preventive practice at all levels of the Organisation – as in other environments, in the workplace “Prevention is better than cure”.

2. Strategies for Handling Occupational Safety and Health

Many people confuse the idea of “accidents” with the Notion of Acts of God. Floods and tornadoes cannot be prevented by the owner or manager, but workplace accidents, injuries and illness can be prevented, and indeed, floods and tornadoes can be anticipated and prepared for.

Nobody wants accidents to happen and to prevent accidents a workplace doesn’t have to be turned upside down. It doesn’t necessarily need to cost a lot of money or require a large commitment of resources. An organisation needs only to apply recognized preventive principles, and at all times the demonstration from management of personal concern for employee safety and health as the priority in the workplace. If the workplace management is not interested in preventing employee injury and illness, nobody else is likely to be. The preparation of a local Occupational Health and Safety Plan allows management to formally present its commitment to its employees and to provide concrete strategies to achieve health and safety for all staff.

Some simple strategies involving minimal resources include setting up a joint employee-management safety Committee. Similarly, it is important to keep good
documentation concerning health and safety in the workplace such as inspection and accident reports and ensure these are reviewed and problems followed-up when needed.

Involvement of all staff in planning and carrying out health and safety activities developed to achieve the goal and objectives of your workplace health and safety program will help to ensure its effectiveness. This sharing of responsibility between management and employees will help to ensure that health and safety are considered in all aspects of the work. As mentioned above, a plan for prevention of accidents and injuries is important but workers exposed to poor work procedures such as improper use of computers (broken chairs, inadequate light, cables etc.) may suffer poor health in conjunction with routine work as well as by accident. The extent of the exposure or of the harm that may result may not be realised without a regular and detailed analysis of hazards in the workplace as part of an Occupational Health and Safety Plan (OHS Plan). The effect may not appear immediately, but it may be fatal in the long run. A plan that includes prevention of these “health hazard exposures” as well as accidents and considers the specific risks within individual workplaces is needed. Each workplace is different. A small business in which the primary hazards may be equipment, toxic materials and precise work procedures will have different preventive strategies to a social welfare or health care Organisation, in which work procedures with clients may be less clearly defined and the stresses involved in “helping” professional become more relevant.

This manual attempts to bring together the key components which could be considered in developing an Occupational Health and Safety Plan for any small company or Organisation. Some specific risks and preventive strategies are considered in more detail, however the basic components can be effectively introduced into any Organisation with a minimal commitment of resources. The Occupational Health and Safety Plan itself is just one component of a broader workplace Health Promotion strategy, in which an Organisation goes beyond preventive practice and sees the promotion of overall health and well-being of employees as a valuable investment. However this document focuses on Occupational Health and Safety.

3. What is an Occupational Health and Safety Plan?

An Occupational Health and Safety Plan demonstrates an organisation’s commitment to health and safety in the workplace by providing a clearly written statement of intent and plan of action for the prevention of accidents and occupational illness and injury. Following are some key components which might be considered in preparing an OHS Plan for any small company or Organisation.

4. Preparing an Occupational Health and Safety Plan

4.1 Statement of commitment from management

A clear and written statement from management concerning the health and well-being of all staff is the first important component of any OHS Plan. It both indicates
ultimate accountability for implementing and regularly assessing the Plan and indicates to employees that health and safety is a major priority within the Organisation. The statement may extend to others who may enter the workplace, such as clients or customers, and may acknowledge the health and safety needs of special groups within the Organisation as a consequence of cultural diversity or physical capacity of individuals.

A model for such a statement might include the following:

“Our Organisation considers its staff as its most valuable assets and we commit ourselves to maintaining the health and safety of all staff as a priority for the Organisation. This commitment to health and safety also extends to others in the workplace such as our clients.

Our commitment to workplace health and safety will only be realisable through the active participation of all our staff. It is our expectation that staff will enthusiastically support activities designed to enhance their health and safety and the management will commit the time and resources needed to make this possible.

Our Organisation recognises the importance of ensuring that all policies and in particular that relating to health and safety are understandable and appropriate for all staff from all cultural backgrounds.

To support this commitment management will prepare a written document, its Occupational Health and Safety Plan, in collaboration with staff, outlining a plan of activities to ensure good awareness of all risks within the workplace and strategies for preventing injuries, illness and accidents resulting from these risks. We also commit ourselves to local and national regulations appropriate to our organisation in support of workplace health and safety.”

4.2. Aim

Unlike the statement of vision above, the Aim should provide a clear and measurable statement of the overall aim of the Plan, such as;

To prevent accidents, injuries and illness resulting from all foreseeable workplace hazards and risks and to respond rapidly and appropriately when these occur.

4.3 Objectives

What specific and measurable objectives can be described in order to reach the above aim, given the resources available? A set of objectives such as the following might be considered;
To develop in the workplace a collaborative approach to managing Occupational health and Safety between management and employees.

To provide and maintain safe working procedures and operations.

To ensure awareness of all potential workplace risks and hazards and to develop preventive strategies against these risks and hazard develop .

To provide appropriate training to all staff to enable employees to work safely and effectively.

To maintain a constant and continuing interest in the improvement of occupational health and safety performance and to provide the human and other resources necessary for the implementation and maintenance of the OHS Plan.

4.4 Activities for achieving these goals

A number of concrete activities through which these objectives can be realised have already been mentioned. The following list briefly introduces some key activities. As mentioned above, in preparing these activities, attention should be paid to the needs of particular groups of employees such as those from other cultural backgrounds or those with disabilities.

- A strong and written commitment from the management in supporting the planning, implementation and maintenance of an OHS Plan and to ensuring safety and health in the workplace
- The OHS Plan should have the same importance as all other policies of the organization and all policy changes should be considered in terms of their impact on workplace health and safety
- Try to ensure the active participation of all staff in OHS activities
- Communication to all staff of all information concerning health and safety in general and in relation to the activities of the OHS Plan, including ongoing updates and reporting.
- Organisational clarity and transparency in general adds to workplace health and safety not only by reducing stress amongst staff but also assists both transfer of and the uptake of information by employees.
- A collaborative Organisational Safety Committee including representatives from management and employees is valuable in ensuring involvement of all employees and in identifying risks and finding practical and effective preventive strategies
- Responsibilities and accountability: the Plan should clearly define responsibilities and accountability for management, for supervisors and employees as well as the OHS Safety Committee if this is planned.
- The OHS Plan should include as a minimum standard, those national health and safety regulations that are applicable to a particular workplace.
- Ensuring all workers are appropriately registered with the appropriate national authority responsible for workplace accident insurance.
Risks and Hazards assessment: identification of all hazards and risks in the workplace, some of which may be common to many workplaces and others which will be specific for each individual workplace and for specific tasks within the workplace. Risk assessments should be regularly updated as work practices, equipment, staff change. As well as a detailed assessment of the workplace, employee surveys of workplace health and safety are also valuable (see Appendix 2).

Putting prevention into practice: develop strategies, within the available resources of the Organisation, to control, respond rapidly to and prevent accidents, illness and injury resulting from each of these identified hazards and risks.

On the basis of the assessment and the prevention and response strategies clear and documented rules for health and safety in the workplace help to define each employees responsibility.

As well as general workplace rules for health and safety, clear and documented safe work procedures for each of the tasks within the Organization.

Regular inspections of the workplace using checklists based on the risks and hazards analysis and on the identified control and preventive strategies.

Staff orientation (organisational orientation, clear introduction to the tasks required and appropriate work practices, including written job description, awareness of the OHS Plan and their individual responsibilities within the plan).

Training
- Safety Education and Training Program including induction training during orientation and after long periods of leave or changes of work activity.
- Encouraging personal development of staff so that all staff are well trained for the tasks they must undertake.

First aid: if possible all staff should have the opportunity to undertake first aid training. However, at least one staff member should be available during all work periods who is trained to provide basic first aid. Readily available and regularly checked material for the provision of first aid is essential.

An emergency plan: a plan for responding to medical and other emergencies such as fire or hazardous incidents will help to minimise damage to personnel, buildings, and equipment. The plan should include easily accessible contact numbers for emergency medical care, ambulance, fire brigade, police.

Employee Safety Handbooks and Procedure Manuals are invaluable in clearly defining Health and Safety responsibilities and safe work practices within an Organisation.

Property Maintenance to keep the workplace environment both clean and free from obvious risks.

Documentation and reporting: It is essential that records relevant to the OHS Plan are maintained and reviewed regularly. Such records include:
- Incident/accident, injury and illness reporting,
- Incident/accident investigations,
- Minutes of committee meetings,
- All updates or changes to the OSH Plan,
- Periodic evaluation reports on the outcome of the OHS Plan.

For all of these activities to remain effective, the OHS Plan must be kept up-to-date and the goal of workplace health and safety built into all aspects of the workplace.
The following links contain Guidelines and Strategies for the promotion of occupational health and safety developed by the European Union:

http://europe.osh.eu.int/legislation/directives/


http://europe.osh.eu.int
5. Details concerning some specific OHS Plan activities and some specific risks

5.1 Workplace Health and Safety Committee

What is a workplace health and safety committee?
An occupational health and safety committee is a forum for cooperative involvement of employees representing both labour and management which assists in bringing the internal responsibility system into practice.

What is the purpose of workplace health and safety committee?
An effective safety program needs the cooperative involvement of all employees and employer. A joint health and safety committee brings together practical knowledge of specific jobs and management's larger overview of job interrelationships, general company policies and procedures. This team can be more effective in solving health and safety problems than a single individual as in general teamwork.

To function properly, the committee needs an appropriate structure, a clear statement of purpose and duties, and standard procedures for meetings. In different surveys done from different countries it has been stated that unclear job description does increase level of stress at workplace. An employer does this by establishing terms of reference for the committee and by allocating adequate resources. Once the committee members have been chosen, the committee should participate in decisions on the details of its structure, duties, and procedures. However, the joint occupational health and safety committee members should be active participants in the development, implementation, and monitoring of all phases of the health and safety program.

OHS Answers: basic OH&S program elements. Canadian Center for Occupational Health and Safety, 1998
http://www.ccohs.ca/oshanswers/hsprograms/basic.html
5.2 Responsibilities concerning Occupational Health and Safety

While managers are accountable for implementing national legislations concerning health and safety, health and safety is the joint responsibility of management and workers, with each individual having specific responsibilities.

What are individual responsibilities?
Responsibility may be defined as an individual's obligation to carry out assigned duties. Health and safety responsibility is not just an extra part of an employee's job but an integral, full-time component of each individual's responsibilities. Responsibility and authority can be delegated to subordinates. It is important to note that, while some responsibilities can be delegated, managers remain accountable for seeing that they are carried out.

Individual responsibilities apply to every employee in the workplace. When a safety coordinator or committee has been appointed, it is best to spell out his/her/their responsibilities as well. All employees will then know exactly what is expected of each individual in health and safety terms.

**Responsibilities of safety coordinators might include**
- attending health and safety committee meetings as a resource person
- to advise all employees on health and safety matters
- coordinating interdepartmental health and safety activities
- collecting and analyzing health and safety statistics
- conducting research on special problems
- organizing health and safety training for employees when necessary.

**Employee responsibilities might include**
- Participation in joint health and safety committees.
- Knowing and complying with all regulations pertaining to his workplace.
- Following safe work procedures
- Reporting unsafe acts and conditions, injury or illness immediately, which can be avoided by proper use of personal protective equipment.

**Management responsibilities might include**
As has been mentioned above, a statement of commitment to workplace health and safety by the management is a priority. This is achievable by:
- Promoting health and safety awareness through training workers on health and safety regulations.
- Regular inspection of the workplace, correcting unsafe work practices and conditions
- reporting and investigating all accidents or incidents so as to minimize or eliminate hazards.
- Supporting everyday health and safety activities such as ensuring personal protective equipment is available
- provision of medical and first aid facilities.
- Monitoring and evaluating occupational health and safety
Activities that might be implemented by a Health and Safety Committee (or coordinator)

- participate in development and implementation of programs to protect the employees’ safety and health,
- deal with employee complaints and suggestions concerning safety and health,
- ensure the maintenance and monitoring of injury and work hazard records,
- monitor and follow-up hazard reports and recommend action,
- set up and promote programs to improve employee training and education,
- participate in all safety and health inquiries and investigations,
- consult with professional and technical experts,
- participate in resolving workplace refusals,
- make recommendations to management for accident prevention and safety program activities, and
- monitor effectiveness of safety programs and procedures.

Adapted from: OHS Answers: basic OH&S program elements. Canadian Center for Occupational Health and Safety, 1998
http://www.ccohs.ca/oshanswers/hsprograms/basic.html
5.3 Safe and effective work practices/procedures

National health and safety regulations represent minimum requirements for health and safety in the workplace. In almost all cases, organizations will have to augment these regulations with specific rules that all staff are expected to follow in the carrying out of daily work tasks, so that all staff can work safely and effectively. As mentioned above, it is preferable that all staff have contributed to the development of these correct work practices.

Here are some guidelines to be followed for establishing these rules:

- rules should be specific to health safety concerns in the workplace
- occupational health and safety committee should participate in their formulation of rules
- rules should be stated in clearly understandable terms
- rules are best stated in positive terms ("employees shall" not "employees shall not")
- the reasons for the rule should be explained
- rules must be enforceable, since disregard for one rule will lead to disregard for others
- rules should be available to all employees in written form, in the languages of communication of employees
- rules should be periodically reviewed to evaluate effectiveness and to make changes for improved effectiveness

Compliance with health and safety rules should be considered a condition of employment. Rules should be explained to new employees when they start work or if they are transferred. After a suitable interval, these employees should be briefed to ensure they understand the rules applicable to their work. Disciplinary action for non-compliance might be considered. Points that should be considered in establishing procedures on this issue are:

- ensure that employees are aware of the rules
- ensure that employees are not encouraged, coerced, or forced to disregard the rule by fellow employees
- all rules are to be observed
- no violation will be disregarded
- the role of discipline is that of education, not punishment
- action is taken promptly
- while having guidelines for penalties for the first offence or infractions may be desirable, some flexibility is required when applying the guidelines since each case will vary in its circumstances
- action is taken in private, and recorded.

**How does management establish correct work procedures?**
Correct work procedures are the safest way of doing a job, job instruction, monitoring performance, and accident investigation. Job safety analysis is the first step in developing the correct procedure whereby each task of a specific job is examined to identify hazards and to determine the safest way to do the job. This can be achieved through the following steps:
1. Select the job  
2. Break down the job into a sequence of steps  
3. Identify the hazards  
4. Define preventive measures  

The analysis could be conducted on all critical tasks or jobs as a first priority. Critical jobs include:

- those where frequent accidents and injuries or illnesses occur
- those with a potential for severe injuries or illnesses
- new or modified jobs
- infrequently performed jobs, such as maintenance

Job safety analysis is generally carried out by observing a worker doing the job. Members of the joint health and safety committee should participate in this process. The reason for the exercise must be clearly explained to the worker, emphasizing that the job, not the individual, is being studied. Another approach, useful in the analysis of infrequently-performed or new jobs, is group discussion.

A work procedure may consist of more than one specific task. In such cases, each separate task should be analyzed to complete a job safety analysis for that procedure. The final version of the correct work procedure should be presented in a narrative style format that outlines the correct way to do the job in a step-by-step outline. The steps are described in positive terms, pointing out the reasons why they are to be done in this way. Reference may be made to applicable rules and regulations and to the personal protective equipment required, if any. Employees who carry out the tasks should be consulted in developing the procedure.

http://www.ccohs.ca/oshanswers/hsprograms/basic.html
5.4 Emergency action plan

An emergency plan specifies procedures for handling sudden unexpected situations. The lack of an emergency plan could lead to severe losses such as multiple casualties and possible financial collapse of the organization.

Objectives

- to prevent fatalities and injuries.
- to reduce damage to personnel, buildings, and equipment.
- to accelerate the resumption of normal operations.

A vulnerability assessment extends the standard risks and hazards assessment to potentially major emergencies, such as fire, explosion, loss of power or natural hazards such as storms.

In case of such emergencies, an emergency plan should assign the following specific responsibilities in advance:
- reporting the emergency
- activating the emergency plan
- assuming overall command
- establishing communication
- alerting staff
- ordering evacuation
- alerting external agencies
- confirming evacuation complete
- alerting outside population of possible risk
- requesting external aid
- coordinating activities of various groups
- advising relatives of casualties
- providing medical aid

External departments to assist

Telephone numbers of the following departments to be clearly written.

- fire department
- mobile rescue squad
- ambulance services
- police department
- hospitals
- government agencies

Testing and Revision

Completing a comprehensive plan for handling emergencies is a major step toward preventing disasters. However, it is difficult to predict all of the problems that may happen unless the plan is tested. Exercises and drills may be conducted to practice all or critical portions (such as evacuation) of the plan. A thorough and immediate review after each exercise, drill, or after an actual emergency will point out areas that require improvement. Knowledge of individual responsibilities can be evaluated through paper tests or interviews.

5.5 Ergonomics

Ergonomics is the practice of designing equipment and work tasks to conform to the capability of the worker, it provides a means for adjusting the work environment and work practices to prevent injuries before they occur. When there is a mismatch between the physical requirements of the job and the physical capacity of the worker, work-related musculoskeletal disorders can result.

The design and layout of working facility is critical in reducing risk factors. Workplace analysis might be useful to identify existing and potential workplace hazards and find ways to correct these hazards. Continual education and training about ergonomic hazards to be updated and presented to employees in the language that they can understand. Musculoskeletal disorders often result through the improper use of computers which are used frequently by many workers. The problems of computers as ergonomic stressors are discussed in details below.

Computers

Millions of people work with computers every day. There is no single “correct” posture or arrangement of components that will fit everyone. However, there are basic design goals, some of which are shown in the accompanying figures, to consider when setting up a computer workstation or performing computer-related tasks.

How can Organizations reduce the chance of becoming sore, tired, or injured while using the computer?

The following simple, inexpensive principles for computer use might help an Organisation to create a safe and comfortable computer workstation.

- Top of monitor at or just below eye level
- Head and neck balanced and in-line with torso
- Shoulders relaxed
- Elbows close to body and supported
- Lower back supported
- Wrists and hands in-line with forearms
- Adequate room for keyboard and mouse
- Feet flat on the floor

A well-designed workstation with a properly selected computer mouse helps prevent discomfort and injury. By following the checklist below, this might help to prevent or reduce such problems.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Checklist for computer use</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1.</strong> Head and neck to be upright or in-line with the torso (not bent down/back).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2.</strong> Head, neck, and trunk to face forward (not twisted).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3.</strong> Trunk to be perpendicular to floor (may lean back into backrest but not forward).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4.</strong> Shoulders and upper arms to be in-line with the torso, generally about perpendicular to the floor and relaxed (not elevated or stretched forward).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>5.</strong> Upper arms and elbows to be close to the body (not extended outward).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>6.</strong> Forearms, wrists, and hands to be straight and in-line (forearm at about 90 degrees to the upper arm).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>7.</strong> Wrists and hands to be straight (not bent up/down or sideways toward the little finger).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
8. **Thighs** to be parallel to the floor and the **lower legs** to be perpendicular to floor (thighs may be slightly elevated above knees).
9. **Feet** rest flat on the floor or are supported by a stable footrest.
10. **Backrest** provides support for your lower back (lumbar area).
11. **Seat width** and **depth** accommodate the specific user (seat pan not too big/small).
12. **Seat front** does not press against the back of your knees and lower legs (seat pan not too long).
13. **Seat** has cushioning and is rounded with a "waterfall" front (no sharp edge).
14. **Armrests**, if used, support both forearms while you perform computer tasks and they do not interfere with movement.
15. **Keyboard/input device platform(s)** is stable and large enough to hold a keyboard and an input device.
16. **Input device** (mouse or trackball) is located right next to your keyboard so it can be operated without reaching.
17. **Input device** is easy to activate and the shape/size fits your hand (not too big/small).
18. **Wrist** and **hands** do not rest on sharp or hard edges.
19. **Top** of the screen is at or below eye level so you can read it without bending your head or neck down/back.
20. **User with bifocals/trifocals** can read the screen without bending the head or neck backward.
21. **Monitor distance** allows you to read the screen without leaning your head, neck or trunk forward/backward.
22. **Monitor position** is directly in front of you so you don't have to twist your head or neck.
23. **Glare** (for example, from windows, lights) is not reflected on your screen which can cause you to assume an awkward posture to clearly see information on your screen.
24. **Thighs** have sufficient clearance space between the top of the thighs and your computer table/keyboard platform (thighs are not trapped).
25. **Legs** and **feet** have sufficient clearance space under the work surface so you are able to get close enough to the keyboard/input device.
26. **Document holder**, if provided, is stable and large enough to hold documents.
27. **Document holder**, if provided, is placed at about the same height and distance as the monitor screen so there is little head movement, or need to re-focus, when you look from the document to the screen.
28. **Wrist/palm rest**, if provided, is padded and free of sharp or square edges that push on your wrists.
29. **Wrist/palm rest**, if provided, allows you to keep your forearms, wrists, and hands straight and in-line when using the keyboard/input device.
30. **Telephone** can be used with your head upright (not bent) and your shoulders relaxed (not elevated) if you do computer tasks at the same time.
31. Workstation and equipment have sufficient adjustability so you are in a safe working posture and can make occasional changes in posture while performing computer tasks.
32. Computer workstation, components and accessories are maintained in serviceable condition and function properly.
33. Computer tasks are organized in a way that allows you to vary tasks with other work activities, or to take micro-breaks or recovery pauses while at the computer workstation.

OSHA Ergonomic Solutions: computer workstations eTool – Evaluation checklist
U.S. Department of Labour, Occupational Safety and Health Administration
Further to working with display screen equipment
1. Adjust the backrest of your chair to support your lower back, and sit well back in the chair.
2. Adjust the seat height until your forearms are horizontal and wrists straight while using the keyboard.
3. Do not rest your wrists on the edge of the keyboard or desk or bend your hands up at the wrist while typing. Keep a soft touch on the keys and do not over stretch your fingers. If you are not a competent typist you should consider taking a course, as poor keyboard technique can cause symptoms.
4. When you have the seat height correct, if your feet do not rest comfortably on the floor use a footrest.
5. The screen should be approximately at arm’s length. Adjust the height of the screen to suit yourself. If you need to look at the keyboard the screen should be lowered to avoid repeated neck movement. Adjust the angle of the screen to suit your sitting height.
6. Do not lean over to read documents. Use a document holder, and place it beside the screen at the same distance, height and angle as the screen.
7. Position the mouse within easy reach so that you can use it with the wrist straight and without stretching. Intensive use of a mouse, trackball or other pointing device can cause symptoms as it concentrates effort on a small group of muscles of one hand/arm. Substitute keystrokes where you can, and if you need to use it a lot, try learning to use it with the other hand so that you halve the load on your preferred hand/arm. You will be surprised at how quickly you become ambidextrous. If you find gripping your mouse awkward try a differently shaped or larger one, or try a trackball.
8. Position the workstation so that you are not looking at windows or lights. Avoid reflections from windows or lights on the screen. Sit sideways to windows, and use a blind to cut out unwanted light. An earthed mesh filter may be found helpful in reducing reflections and static.
9. Adjust the brightness to suit the lighting conditions in the room.
10. If there is drifting, flicker or any other deterioration of the image on the screen this should be put right.
11. Keep the screen clean.
12. Sitting in the same position for long periods is undesirable, so break the work up with other activities which do not involve similar movements of the arms and wrists, and which preferably involve some walking about. You should aim to spend 5 to 10 minutes out of every hour doing something else. Do not work continuously at your display screen for periods of longer than an hour without a break.
13. If your eyesight is good or is satisfactorily corrected by spectacles or contact lenses, you should have no difficulty using a display screen. If you wear bifocals you may find that you need a separate pair of spectacles to work at the display screen comfortably. (Most wearers of reading glasses find that their reading prescription is suitable for display screen work). If you are quite sure that your work station is satisfactory and yet you get headaches or 'eyestrain', or if you cannot achieve a layout that is comfortable, you should consider visual problems. It would then be appropriate for you to have your eyesight tested.

14. If you are using a display screen forms a substantial part of your work, you may be entitled to an appropriate eye test.

15. To avoid excessive heat building up, if it is practicable to do so the machine should be switched off when not in use. A dry atmosphere assists build up of static electricity; anti-static mats, humidifiers or leafy pot plants may help.

16. If you find your software difficult to use you should discuss this with your supervisor.

17. Noisy printers should be fitted with a hood or put in an unoccupied room.

NB. If you experience symptoms which you think are related to your display screen work you should report this both in your employer and to the Occupational Health Service. Do not delay this, as new symptoms can usually be relieved quickly, but established problems can be very difficult to resolve and without stretching. Intensive use of a mouse, trackball or other pointing device can cause symptoms as it concentrates effort on a small group of muscles of one hand/arm. Substitute keystrokes where you can, and if you need to use it a lot, try learning to use it with the other hand so that you halve the load on your preferred hand/arm. You will be surprised at how quickly you become ambidextrous. If you find gripping your mouse awkward try a differently shaped or larger one, or try a trackball.
5.6 First Aid

Scenarios

a. Your colleague sitting next to your desk for the past few days has been complaining about severe headache and easily irritated by minor conversation. For the whole day he has not been talking to anybody. On his way home he fell down next to his desk due to the telephone cord which hooked his leg.

b. As you enter your office one morning, you find one of the organization’s handyman lying, face-down, next to a ladder. You notice that he had been working on the neon light fitting above your desk. You see some blood on his ankle and notice that the lower leg is severely injured.

How would you handle these situations?

The purpose of rendering emergency first aid is to save life or to provide quick and appropriate care in the case of everyday accidents and injuries which can happen in any organisation. It may range from providing and maintaining basic life support until advanced medical help arrives and preventing a condition from getting worse to bandaging a cut finger. In either case the first responder’s actions are crucial to the well-being of the victim and can make the difference between life and death. Wrong decisions and actions can have tragic consequences. In order to act with competence and confidence the first aid responder needs to be properly trained in emergency first aid procedures and techniques.

Basic First Aid Intervention might include:

- Bandaging of the head, chest, shoulder, arm, leg, wrist, elbow, foot, ankle, fingers, toes, and knee.
- Splinting of the arm, elbow, clavicle, fingers hand, forearm, ribs, hip, femur, lower leg, ankle, knee, foot, and toes.
- Moving and rescuing victims including one and two person lifts, ankle and shoulder pulls, and the blanket pull.

Also included should be:

Basic Adult CPR training which include instruction in:

- establishing and maintaining adult airway patency.
- performing adult breathing resuscitation.
- performing adult circulatory resuscitation.
- performing choking assessments and appropriate first aid interventions.
- resuscitating the drowning victim.

Universal precautions

Universal precautions are essential in any organisation which routinely handles blood and other potentially infectious body fluids. However universal precautions should also be used in providing first aid. Consequently, first aid training should consider:

- the meaning of universal precautions, which body fluids are considered potentially infectious, and which are regarded as hazardous.
- the value of universal precautions for infectious diseases such as AIDS and hepatitis B.
- the necessity for keeping gloves and other protective equipment readily available and the appropriate use of them.
- the appropriate tagging and disposal of any sharp item or instrument requiring special disposal measures such as blood soaked material etc.
- the appropriate management of blood spills.

It is the duty of the organization to provide First Aid equipment on the premises which should be checked and replaced regularly. All employees should know the location of the First Aid Kit which should be clearly written with the emergency telephone numbers for medical assistance (perhaps the nearest medical clinic), ambulances, the nearest hospital etc.

If an employee has a work related injury or illnesses that requires professional medical assistance, as part of an OHS Plan he/she would be responsible to write a incident report about the injury and keep record. Such documentation may also be a legal requirement for the purpose of workplace accident insurance.

In all cases requiring emergency medical treatment, immediately call, or have a co-worker call, to request emergency medical assistance. Provide details for the completion of the accident investigation report.
5.7 Orientation

Why is an employee orientation important?
Health and safety education should start with employee orientation when an employee joins the organization or is transferred to a new job. It has been found that inexperienced workers, in general, are involved in accidents at a higher rate than others. They can also be more exposed to work related stress. While experience can only be gained through time, both health and safety education and job skills training can be used to improve this record. Orientation sessions normally cover such items as:

- explanation of the function of the work unit,
- organizational relationships,
- administrative arrangements, and
- miscellaneous policies and rules.

Items related to health and safety that should be included are:

- emergency procedures
- location of first aid kit
- health and safety responsibilities, including those specified by legislation
- reporting of injuries, unsafe conditions and acts
- use of personal protective equipment
- right to refuse hazardous work
- hazards, including those outside own work area
- reasons for each health and safety rule

Orientation sessions can be offered on commencement of employment, reassignment or transfer to a new job, when coming back from extended leave.

Other questions which the orientation programme should answer for new staff included:

- What are the hazards of the job?
- Is job safety training available?
- What safety equipment do I need to do my job?
- Do I need to wear personal protective equipment (PPE)? Will I receive training on how to use the PPE?
- What do I do in case of fire or another emergency?
- Where do I find fire extinguishers, first aid kits, first aid rooms and emergency assistance?
- What are my responsibilities regarding health and safety?
- If I notice something wrong, to whom should I report?
- Who is responsible for answering safety-related questions?
- What do I do if I get injured or have an accident?

Finally, as with other aspects of the OHS Plan, is there any evaluation of the orientation programme?

http://www.ccohs.ca/oshanswers/hsprograms/basic.html
### 5.8 Training

**How is a training program designed?**

The objective of training is to ease the implementation of health and safety policies into specific job practices and to raise awareness and skill levels to an acceptable standard. While all employees can benefit from health and safety training, special attention should be given to the training of managers, trainers, and workers in general. It is advisable that training be conducted by a qualified person. In some places, employees and managers directly responsible for health and safety matters need to have certification, as required by the law.

Occasions when employee training may be required are:
- commencement of employment
- reassignment or transfer to a new job
- introduction of new equipment or procedures
- inadequate performance

The following would of value to be included on the training programme:
- the workplace OHS Plan and associated responsibilities
- documented correct work practices
- risk awareness
- human relations
- maintaining interest in health and safety at workplace
- general hygiene
- personal protective equipment
- housekeeping to maintain a safe environment
- fire protection

External sources for training assistance may be useful such as unions, government agencies, professional consultants etc.

http://www.ccohs.ca/oshanswers/hsprograms/basic.html
5.9 Self-inspection check lists

Checklists for OHS Plan activities and for common and workplace specific hazards and risks are valuable for regularly assessment of the status of the workplace in terms of health and safety.

POSTING OF SIGNS

☐ Are emergency telephone numbers posted where they can be readily found in case of emergency
☐ Are signs concerning “Exiting from buildings,” posted where appropriate

RECORDKEEPING

☐ Are all occupational injury or illnesses, except minor injuries requiring only first aid, being recorded
☐ Are employee medical records required for employees and records of employee exposure to hazardous substances or harmful physical agents as well as psychological stressors up-to-date
☐ Are employee training records (OHS) kept and accessible for review
☐ Have arrangements been made to maintain OHS records for the legal period of time for each specific type record?

SAFETY AND HEALTH PROGRAM

☐ Do you have an active safety and health program in operation that deals with general safety and health program elements as well as the management of hazards specific to workplace
☐ Is there a person clearly responsible for the overall activities of the safety and health program
☐ Do you have a safety committee that meets regularly and report in writing on its activities
☐ Do you have a working procedure for handling employee complaints regarding safety and health
☐ Are employees advised of the successful effort and accomplishments of the safety committee in assuring that they have safety and health in their workplace
☐ Have you considered incentives for employees or teams who have excelled in reducing workplace injury/illnesses or developing preventive strategies

MEDICAL SERVICES AND FIRST AID

☐ Is there a hospital or medical clinic for quick medical care in close proximity to your workplace
☐ If medical and first-aid facilities are not close at hand, are employees trained to administer first aid at all times
☐ Are all employees expected to respond to medical emergencies (1) received first-aid training; (2) had hepatitis B vaccination made available to them; (3) had appropriate training on procedures to protect them from blood-borne pathogens, including universal precautions; and (4) have available and understand how to use appropriate personal protective equipment to protect against exposure to blood borne diseases

☐ Where employees have had an exposure incident involving blood borne pathogens, are there any provision for an immediate post-exposure medical evaluation and follow-up

☐ Are medical or other specialist personnel readily available for advice and consultation on matters of employees’ health

☐ Are emergency phone numbers posted

☐ Are first-aid kits easily accessible with necessary supplies available, periodically inspected and replenished as needed

☐ Are means provided for quick drenching or flushing of the eyes and body in areas where corrosive liquids or materials are handled

☐ Are psychological first aid, support, supervision, de-briefing, incident counselling, conflict resolutions offered when necessary

FIRE PROTECTION

☐ Is local fire department well acquainted with organizational facilities, its location and specific hazards

☐ If you have a fire alarm system, is it certified as required

☐ If there is a fire alarm system, is it tested as required

☐ If you have outside private fire hydrants, are they flushed at least once a year and on a routine preventive maintenance schedule

☐ Are fire protective elements such as fire doors, fire blankets, fire extinguishers all routinely checked and maintained in good working condition

☐ Are portable fire extinguishers provided in adequate number and type and readily accessible

☐ Are employees periodically instructed in the use of extinguishers and fire protection procedures

PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT AND CLOTHING

☐ Are employers assessing the workplace to determine if hazards that require the use of personal protective equipment like aprons etc. present

☐ Has the employer been trained on personal protective equipment procedures

☐ Are approved safety glasses required to be worn at all times in areas where there is a risk of eye injuries such as punctures, abrasions, contusions or burns

☐ Are protective gloves, aprons, shields, or other means provided where risks have been identified
Where food or beverages are consumed on the premises, are they consumed in areas protected by equipment posing a toxic, caustic, flammable, or other potentially infectious materials?

Is protection against the effects of occupational noise exposure provided?

Are adequate work procedures, protective clothing and equipment provided as needed?

Are there appropriate procedures in place for disposing of contaminated personal protective equipment?

**GENERAL WORK ENVIRONMENT**

- Are all work areas clean, sanitary, and orderly?
- Are work surfaces kept dry or appropriate means taken to assure the surfaces are slip-resistant?
- Are all spilled hazardous materials or liquids, including blood and other potentially infectious materials, cleaned up immediately and according to proper procedures?
- Are there appropriate waste disposal facilities?
- Are the minimum number of toilets and washing facilities provided for both men and women?
- Are all toilets and washing facilities clean and sanitary?
- Are all work areas adequately illuminated?
- Are pits and floor openings covered or otherwise guarded?

**WALKWAYS**

- Are aisles and passageways kept clear?
- Are holes in the floor, sidewalk or other walking surface repaired properly, covered or otherwise made safe?
- Are spilled materials cleaned up immediately?
- Are standard guardrails provided wherever aisle or walkway surfaces are elevated above any adjacent floor or the ground?

**STAIRS AND STAIRWAYS**

- Are standard stair rails or handrails on all stairways having four or more risers?
- Are all stairways at least 22 inches (55.88 centimetres) wide?

**EXITING OR EGRESS**

- Are all exits marked with an exit sign and illuminated by a reliable light source?
- Are the directions to exits, when not immediately apparent, marked with visible signs?
- Are exit signs provided with the word “EXIT” in lettering?
- Are exit doors side-hinged?
- Are all exits kept free of obstructions?
Are at least two means of egress provided from elevated platforms, pits or rooms where the absence of a second exit would increase the risk of injury from hot, poisonous, corrosive, suffocating, flammable, or explosive substances?

Are special precautions taken to protect employees during construction and repair operations?

Is the number of exits from each floor of a building and the number of exits from the building itself, appropriate for the building occupancy load?

Are exit stairways that are required to be separated from other parts of a building enclosed by at least 2-hour fire-resistive construction in buildings more than four stories in height, and not less than 1-hour fire-resistive constructive elsewhere?

Where exiting will be through frameless glass doors, glass exit doors, or storm doors are the doors fully tempered and meet the safety requirements for human impact?

EXIT DOORS

Are doors that are required to serve as exits designed and constructed so that the way of exit travel is obvious and direct?

Are windows that could be mistaken for exit doors, made inaccessible by means of barriers or railings?

Are exit doors openable from the direction of exit travel without the use of a key or any special knowledge or effort when the building is occupied?

Is a revolving, sliding or overhead door prohibited from serving as a required exit door?

Where panic hardware is installed on a required exit door, will it allow the door to open by applying a force in the direction of the exit traffic?

Where exit doors open directly onto any street, alley or other area where vehicles may be operated, are adequate barriers and warnings provided to prevent employees from stepping into the path of traffic?

TRANSPORTING EMPLOYEES AND MATERIALS

Do employees who operate vehicles on public Thorough fares have valid operator’s licenses?

When seven or more employees are transported, is the operator’s license appropriate for the class of vehicle being driven?

Is each vehicle used regularly to transport employees equipped with an adequate number of seats?

Are vehicles used to transport employees equipped with lamps, brakes, horns, mirrors, windshields and turn signals and are they in good repair?

Are employee transport vehicles equipped at all times with at least two reflective type flares?

Is a full charged fire extinguisher, in good condition, and maintained in each employee transport vehicle?

Is adequate makeup air provided to areas where exhaust systems are operating?
Are electrical cords and plugs in good working condition and not lying around on
the walkways?

Adapted from:- OSHA Handbook for Small Businesses. Safety management Series.
U.S. Department of Labour, Occupational Safety and Health Administration. OSHA 2209 1996(revised).
5.10 Stress – Psychosocial aspects of occupational health and safety

The causes of stress are various and diverse. Two of the classic examples of the causes of stress are time pressure and an overload of work. Other causes may be found in the structure of the organization, the level of education of staff, or quite simply the uncertainties concerning what is demanded of employees.

With the help of the following questions, you can test to what extent you are affected by stress at work:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preliminary test – are there any problems with work related stress at my workplace?</th>
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</table>
| **Atmosphere**  
Do you feel that you have to work long hours to keep your job or to get promoted?  
Is suffering from stress seen as a weakness or is it taken seriously?  
Are your work and suggestions valued?  
Is there a constant feeling of pressure to do more, faster? |
| **Demands**  
Have you got too much work to do in too little time?  
Do you find your work too difficult?  
Is your work satisfactory?  
Does your work make you bored?  
Is your workplace too noisy, is the temperature comfortable, and what about ventilation and lightening?  
Are you worried about hazards in your workplace, such as the use of chemicals?  
Do you feel at risk of violence from customers, clients or members of the public? |
| **Control**  
Can you influence the way your job is done?  
Are you involved in the decision making process? |
| **Relationships**  
Is your relationship with your boss o.k.?  
How about your relationships with colleagues, or your staff if you are a manager?  
Are you bullied by anyone in your workplace, by for example experiencing insults, offensive behaviour or that your bosses abuse their power?  
Are you harassed because of your colour, sex, ethnic origin, disability etc.? |
| **Change**  
Are you given information about changes in your work place?  
Are you involved in making changes to your job?  
Are you given support during changes?  
Does it feel like there is too much change, or maybe not enough? |
| **Role**  
Are you clear about what your job is and your responsibilities?  
Do you have to do tasks which you think are not part of your job?  
Do you ever have conflicting roles? |
| **Support**  
Do you have the support of you boss and colleagues?  
Are you praised when you do a good job?  
Do you receive constructive comments or do you feel you only get criticism? |
| **Training**  
Do you have the right skills to do your job?  
Are you encouraged to develop your skills? |
Tell tale symptoms of work related stress to watch out for:

- changes in mood or behaviour, for example, problems with colleagues, feeling irritable and indecisive, problems with job performance,
- feelings of not being able to cope or not being in control,
- Drinking more alcohol or smoking more, or even turning to illegal drugs,
- Health complaints such as frequent headaches, not being able to sleep, heart problems and upset stomach.

From: *Practical Advice for Workers on Tackling Work-related Stress and its Causes: Factsheet* 31. European Agency for Safety and Health at Work

In a Survey of workplaces in Graz Austria involved in provision of services migrants and marginalised groups, the outcome of the investigation provided many problems or stress factors in relation to work with migrants, refugees and marginalised groups.

In response to the question: *What do you believe are the most important contributors to stress in your workplace?* the respondents answered as follows:

- 50% Job insecurity
- 49% Organisational structure or changes in organisation
- 38% Insufficient equipment to perform tasks
- 35% Meeting the needs of the target group
- 27% Too many tasks to undertake
- 26% Communication between staff
- 23% Conflict between staff or between staff and employer
- 18% Conflict with the client group
- 13% Problems outside of the workplace
- 17% The physical nature of the workplace
- 15% Reaching the target group
- 10% Child care problems

Despite this long list of potential risks for workplace stress, there is growing awareness concerning the health risks of stress in the workplace and also of possible preventive strategies. The issue of stress in the workplace is dealt with in depth in the multilingual publication,


([http://www.omega-graz.at/pdf/ratg_ENGL.pdf](http://www.omega-graz.at/pdf/ratg_ENGL.pdf) or the German, Serbo-Croat, French or Spanish versions that are also on the [http://www.omega-graz.at](http://www.omega-graz.at) homepage)
6. Conclusion

Generally, there are assumptions that conditions for people working in small businesses and or organizations tend to work under constrained budgets, particularly non governmental organizations. These limited resources tend to make it difficult for such Organizations to consider occupational health and safety plan as their priority. This guide to developing an occupational health and safety plan has been developed to assist small businesses and organisations to achieve an acceptable standard of health and safety in the workplace, using limited resources. This can be achieved through strong commitment to health and safety in the workplace by both management and employees. When this goal of optimising health and safety in the workplace can be achieved, this will help to reduce the financial cost as well as human suffering.
7. Bibliography


U.S. Department of Labour, Occupational Safety and Health Administration website: http://www.osha.gov/dcsp/smallbusiness/index.html

The following links contain Guidelines and Strategies for the promotion of occupational health and safety developed by the European Union:
http://europe.osha.eu.int/legislation/directives/
http://europe.osha.eu.int


Managing stress at work. University College London. http://ucl.ac.uk/hr/docs/download_forms/stress_policy.doc
Appendix 1. Organizational Policies relevant to employee health and their communication to staff

The following Organisation Policies all impact on the health and well-being of employees and might also be considered when an Organisation is developing an OHS Plan.

- Policy on leave for domestic and personal reasons
- Sickness absence policy
- Grievance procedures
- Disciplinary procedures
- Policy on harassment and bullying at work
- Equal opportunities policy
- Smoking policy
- Policy and procedure on alcohol and substance abused
- Violence at work guidelines
- Lone working policy
- Guide to non-discriminatory language

As indicated above (4.4) all policies, including the OHS Plan, can be clearly communicated to all staff through:

- induction training,
- policy and procedure manuals,
- joint management employee committees,
- job descriptions,
- notice board notices and reminders,
- team talks and meetings,
- demonstration of senior management commitment through effective response and review to committee recommendation and periodic policy evaluations.
Appendix 2. Model Employee Survey of Occupational Health and Safety Risks

In order to identify all potential hazards and risks in a workplace, both physical and psychosocial risks, it is useful to allow employees to contribute their perceptions of these risks anonymously, as well as during health and safety talks and meetings. The following Survey of staff provides one model from which this additional information can be obtained.

**Staff survey of workplace health and safety risks**

“Please provide your personal opinions concerning the conditions of Health and Safety in your Organization, under the following categories. Your participation in this survey is completely voluntary and anonymous and will be valuable in helping to build a workplace in which safety and health are a priority.”

1. **Ergonomic conditions** (e.g. Seating, individual work stations, Computing, Lighting.....)

2. **Physical environment** (e.g. Equipment, rooms, ...)

3. **Organisation and Administration** (e.g., Induction and orientation, Information transfer, workplace rights, wage payment, working conditions and entitlements...)

4. **Risks to physical health and safety** (e.g. risk of accidents...)

5. **General Hygiene** (in particular kitchens, recreational areas, toilet and washing facilities...)

6. **Risks to emotional / psychological health** (e.g. Stress in the workplace, job insecurity...)

7. **Personal safety** (e.g. feeling threatened, such as in work with clients or working alone in the workplace....)

8. **In relation to Health and Safety in general:**
   a. What is missing in the workplace / What improvements can you suggest?

   b. What do you find particularly good in your workplace?

Thank you for your participation in this Survey