

VDUs : an easy guide to the regulations : how to comply with the Health and Safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regulations 1992.

Contributors

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How to comply with the Health and Safety
(Display Screen Equipment) Regulations 1992

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INTRODUCTION

This booklet is for employers who need to comply with the Health and Safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regulations 1992. You may know them as the 'VDU Regulations' or 'Display Screen Regulations.' It is a practical guide, with easy to follow steps on what to do if you have standard office VDUs (visual display units).

If you have equipment other than office type VDUs which you think may be covered, or if you want more information, you should refer to the full Regulations and HSE's detailed guidance (see page 18).

The Regulations put into UK law a European Community Directive which seeks to protect the health of your workers by reducing risks from VDU work. The health problems associated with this type of work are:

- ☐ upper limb disorders (including pains in the neck, arms, elbows, wrists, hands, fingers);
- ☐ temporary eyestrain (but not eye damage) and headaches;
- ☐ fatigue and stress.

The causes may not always be obvious and can be a combination of factors. But enough is known about the importance of some measures - for example, the need to sit properly - to allow the risks to be tackled effectively.

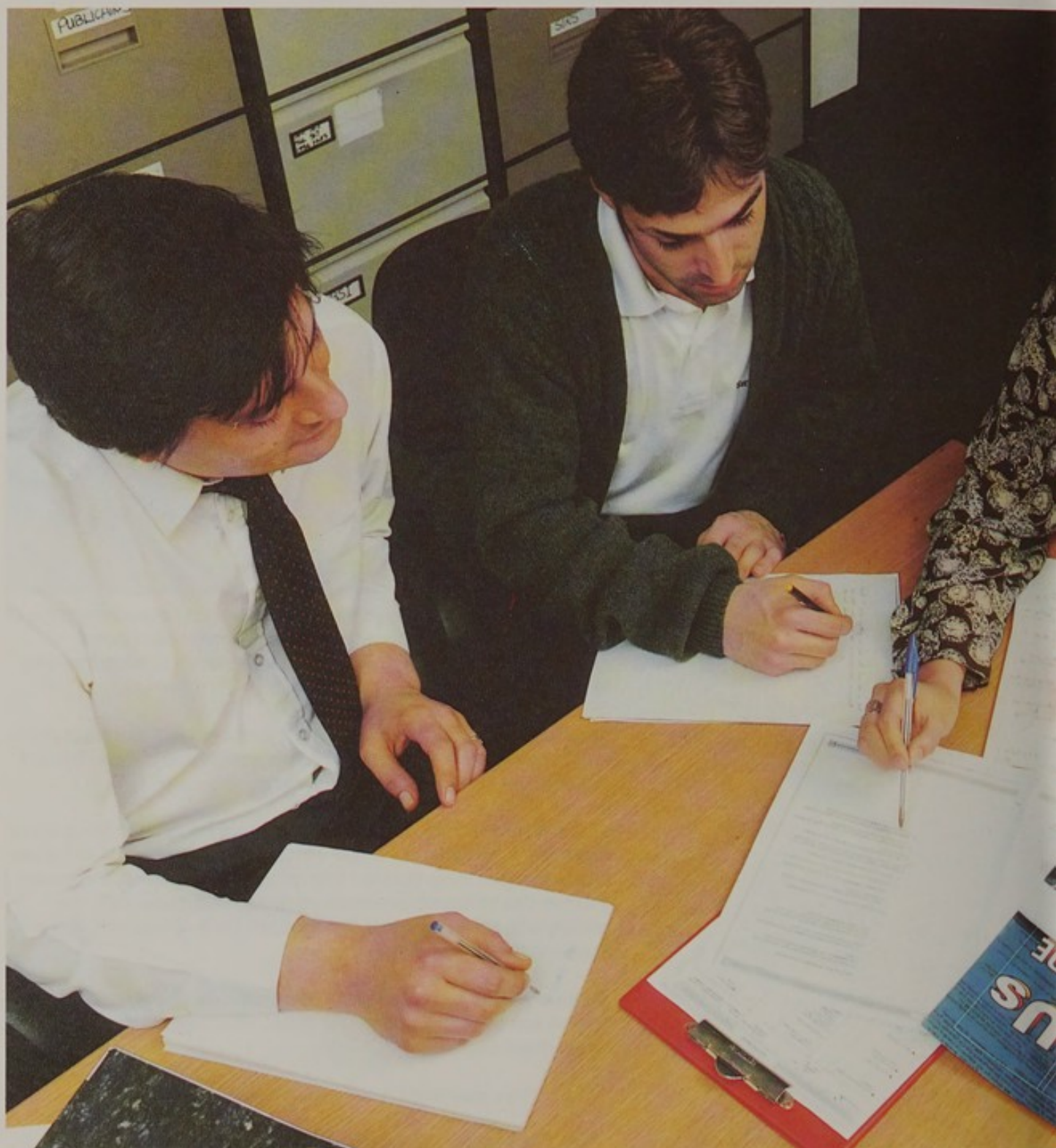
The Regulations came into force on 1 January 1993 and most of the requirements have to be complied with straightaway. If you haven't already, you should be taking steps to comply now.

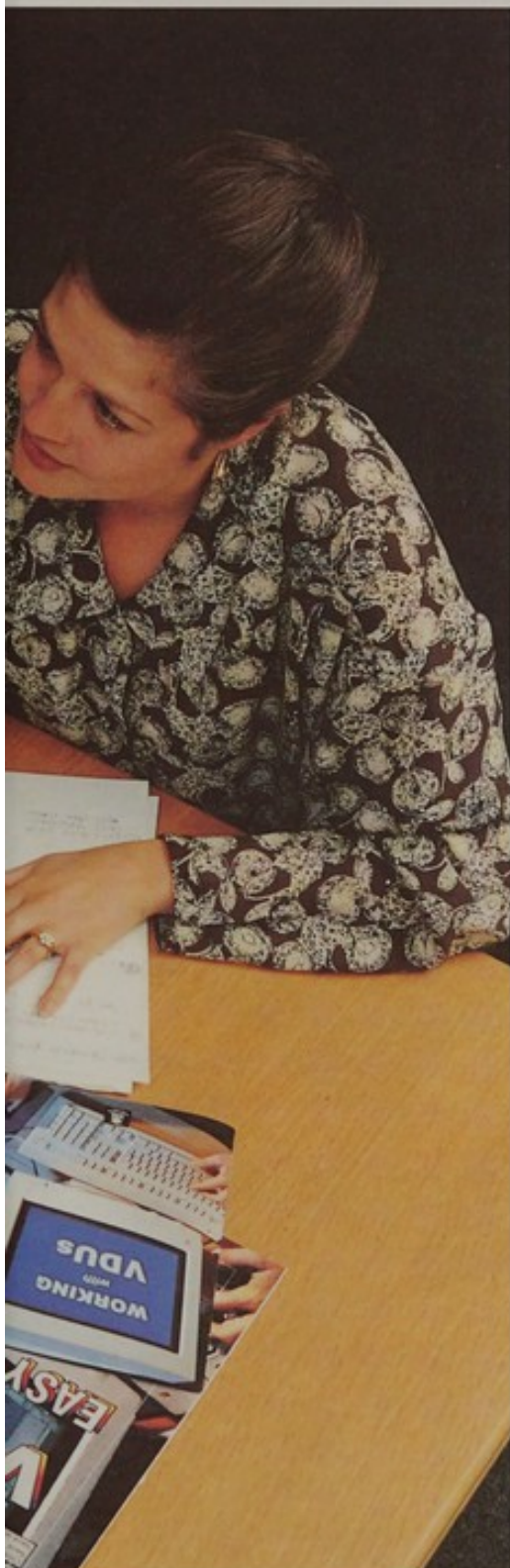
This booklet is colour coded. The blue areas explain the basic steps that need to be taken to comply with the Regulations. The red areas that follow give more detailed help on each of the steps. A checklist you can use to assess workstations and to help make sure they comply with the Schedule to the Regulations is at the back. It gives solutions to some common problems.

Some of the advice in this guide takes the form of **suggestions on how** to comply. Where these are steps not actually required by law, this is made clear, eg:

- ☐ "You **may want** to set a timetable"
- ☐ "**Consider** using videos"
- ☐ "Checklists are **one way** to do assessments"
- ☐ "These guidelines **may be helpful**"
- ☐ "The following points **may help**"





**DECIDE FIRST WHO IS TO BE RESPONSIBLE FOR:**

- 1 Identifying which people and workstations are covered
- 2 Training users and assessors
- 3 Assessing workstations and reducing risks
- 4 Planning breaks and activity changes
- 5 Arranging eye and eyesight tests
- 6 Making sure new hardware and software complies
- 7 Keeping users informed

Make sure whoever you choose (it may be more than one person) agrees their responsibilities and knows what is expected of them. Make this booklet required reading. Check later that action has been taken.

You may want to set a timetable for action.

DON'T ASSUME YOU NEED CONSULTANTS TO HELP YOU COMPLY. YOU WILL PROBABLY NEED OUTSIDE HELP FOR EYE TESTING AND ANY INVESTIGATIONS OF SERIOUS ACHES AND PAINS. BUT SIMPLE PROBLEMS DON'T REQUIRE SPECIALIST EXPERTISE.





STEP 1

STEP
1

DECIDE WHO IS COVERED BY THE REGULATIONS AND IDENTIFY THE WORKSTATIONS THEY USE

Not everyone who uses a VDU is covered by the Regulations - only those most likely to be at risk. You need to decide who these people are. Remember to include homeworkers when deciding.

HELP
OK

HELP

People using a VDU more or less continuously on most days will be 'in'. So, normally, are others who:

- ☐ normally use a VDU for continuous spells of an hour or more at a time; and
- ☐ use it in this way more or less daily; and
- ☐ have to transfer information quickly to or from the screen;

and also need to apply high levels of attention or concentration; or are highly dependent on VDUs or have little choice about using them; or need special training or skills to use the equipment.

Such people are called **users** in this booklet. (The Regulations distinguish between employees - **users** and self-employed workers - **operators**. This distinction is not used here - where certain obligations do not apply to the self-employed, this is made clear in the text.)



STEP 2	
STEP 2	TRAIN USERS AND ASSESSORS
Arrange training for:	
<input type="checkbox"/>	USERS - on the risks, and on safe behaviour and practices. For example, adjustable chairs only reduce risk if users do adjust them and know how to sit. If workstations are substantially changed, users may need retraining.
<input type="checkbox"/>	WORKSTATION ASSESSORS - STEP 3 requires you to assess workstations. Assessors will need to recognise risky workstation layouts, environments and practices. You can train your own staff to do this job.
YOU DO NOT HAVE TO TRAIN SELF-EMPLOYED PEOPLE USING YOUR WORKSTATIONS. THAT IS THEIR RESPONSIBILITY	
<input type="button" value="HELP"/>	<input type="button" value="OK"/>

HELP

Good **user** training should normally cover:



- ☐ risks from VDU work (see Introduction);
- ☐ importance of good posture and changing position;
- ☐ how to adjust furniture to help avoid risks;
- ☐ organising the workplace to avoid awkward or repeated stretching movements;
- ☐ avoiding reflections and glare on the screen;
- ☐ adjusting and cleaning the screen;
- ☐ organising work for activity changes or breaks if necessary;
- ☐ whom to contact for help and report problems or symptoms to;
- ☐ contributing to the risk assessment, eg completing checklists;

Consider using:

- ☐ videos;
- ☐ computer based training discs;
- ☐ HSE employee leaflet *Working with VDUs* (see page 18);
- ☐ wall charts;
- ☐ seminars.



Make sure **users** can ask about points that aren't clear. For example, if you show a video, allow time for questions at the end and have someone present who can answer them authoritatively.

Good training for workstation assessors will cover the points above, plus:

- ☐ how to review checklists;
- ☐ how to identify obvious and less obvious causes of risk;
- ☐ deciding when additional information and help is needed, and where to go for it;
- ☐ how to draw conclusions from assessments and identify steps to reduce risks;
- ☐ recording problems;
- ☐ communicating findings to those who need to take action.

Methods of training include:

- ☐ professionally arranged seminars;
- ☐ getting familiar with HSE guidance *Display Screen Equipment Work. Guidance on Regulations* (see page 18).





STEP 3

**ASSESS WORKSTATIONS AND REDUCE THE RISKS**

Checklists are one easy way to do assessments. Users can fill in the checklist (pages 14-17) themselves. They know what the problems are, and whether or not they are comfortable. For example, a workstation assessor could assess a workstation in the morning and find no glare on the screen; only the user would know that glare was bad in the afternoon.

Ask assessors to check the completed checklists and tackle problems that the user can't solve.

Make arrangements to review assessments when there is a significant change to the workstation, for example when it is relocated.

YOU DO NOT HAVE TO USE CHECKLISTS TO ASSESS WORKSTATIONS. BUT MANY COMPANIES FIND THEM USEFUL.

HELP

OK

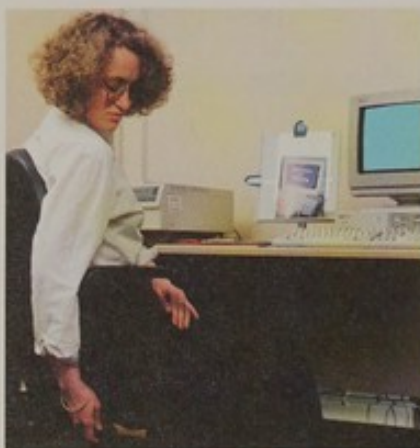
HELP

Users can answer the questions in the first column of the checklist, making adjustments as they go to reduce any problems they find. Where they answer 'Yes', no further action is necessary.

Standard workstation items (for example display screens, keyboards, chairs) do not need individually assessing but **users** will need to check that their items function properly. For example, if all chairs are the same make and model you will know whether they have an adjustment mechanism, but **users** will need to check that their own chair mechanism works.

Assessors may find the following guidelines helpful:

- ☐ Deal with the biggest problems first.
- ☐ Take seriously and investigate reports of aches and pains from **users**.
- ☐ Look for the less obvious causes of risk. For example, poor (ie risky) posture may be due to bad seating, or sitting awkwardly to avoid glare on the screen, or leaning forward to key because arm rests prevent the chair being close to the workstation.
- ☐ Consider different ways of tackling risks, eg if keyboard and screen are fixed, risks could be reduced by increasing job variety.



- ☐ If it is not the assessor's job to buy new equipment or arrange its relocation etc, the person whose job it is should be told.
- ☐ Check to see that action is taken and that it is not causing other problems (see below).
- ☐ Sign-off the checklist at the top to show that everything has been done.

Beware exaggerated claims and misinformation from suppliers of products that are supposed to reduce risks. They may over-simplify or exaggerate problems, or encourage unnecessary bulk purchasing of accessories. **Beware in particular unnecessary:**

- ☐ radiation reducing devices (filters, lead aprons);
- ☐ tinted VDU spectacles;
- ☐ over-elaborate adjustable tables.

Having taken action to reduce the risks, check with the **user** that no new problems have arisen, for example:

- ☐ To have forearms in the correct keying position, a short **user** raises the chair height, but feet can't now be placed flat on the floor. A foot rest is needed.
- ☐ Workstation layout is reorganised to give more space but one **user** is now sitting next to a group of noisy printers.
- ☐ You opt for anti-glare filters but **users** still have headaches because of strong sunlight on their faces.

Completed assessments will need to be reviewed when:

- ☐ major changes to the display screen equipment, furniture, or software are made;
- ☐ new **users** start work, or change workstations;
- ☐ workstations are re-sited;
- ☐ the nature of work changes considerably.

Focus on the aspects that have changed. For example:

- ☐ the environmental factors are important if the workstation location changes;
- ☐ different **users** have different needs - replacing a tall **user** with a short **user** may mean a foot rest is required;
- ☐ **users** working from a number of source documents need more desk space than **users** who are word-processing.





STEP 4

**PLAN CHANGES OF ACTIVITY OR BREAKS FOR USERS**

Breaking up long spells of DSE work helps prevent fatigue and upper limb problems. Where possible, include spells of other work, eg telephone calls, filing, photocopying etc. Otherwise, plan for **users** to take breaks, away from the screen if possible.

THE LENGTH OF BREAK REQUIRED IS NOT SET DOWN IN THE LAW. NEEDS VARY DEPENDING ON THE WORK DONE. YOU ARE NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR PROVIDING BREAKS FOR THE SELF-EMPLOYED.

HELP

OK

HELP

When organising **users**' work the following points may help:

- ☐ vary the tasks, eg let typists walk across the room to pick up work;
- ☐ remind **users** to stretch, blink, and change position;
- ☐ breaks should be taken before users are tired, rather than to recover;
- ☐ short frequent breaks are better than longer, infrequent ones;
- ☐ individual control over work patterns is the ideal;
- ☐ but make sure **users** don't get carried away and work intensely for too long or save breaks to take a few longer ones;
- ☐ imposed rest breaks may sometimes be the only solution, eg in some data preparation activities.



STEP 5

STEP
5**PROVIDE EYE AND EYESIGHT TESTING AND ANY NECESSARY CORRECTION FOR VDU WORK**

Users, and those to become **users**, can request an eye and eyesight test that you have to pay for, if they are your employees. If the test shows they need glasses specifically for their VDU work, you have to pay for a basic pair of frames and lenses.

Users are entitled to further tests at regular intervals after the first test, and in between if they are having visual difficulties which may reasonably be considered to be caused by their VDU work.

IF USERS' NORMAL GLASSES FOR OTHER WORK ARE SUITABLE FOR VDU WORK YOU DON'T NEED TO PAY FOR THEM. YOU DON'T HAVE TO PAY FOR FANCY FRAMES OR LENSES. EYE AND EYESIGHT TESTING IS NOT AN ENTITLEMENT FOR THE SELF-EMPLOYED.

HELP

OK

HELP

When setting up a system for providing **users** with eye and eyesight tests, these points might help:

- ☐ contact a number of opticians and ask what they charge for tests and basic glasses;
- ☐ ask if they will come to the firm to test **users**;
- ☐ ask for standard information about each **user** they test: if they need glasses for VDU work and when they should be re-tested;
- ☐ tell **users** what arrangements you have made;
- ☐ make sure **users** understand what you will and won't pay for (eg tinted lenses, glasses for non-VDU purposes are not your responsibility).



STEP 6

STEP
6**MAKE SURE NEW WORKSTATIONS COMPLY WITH THE SCHEDULE TO THE REGULATIONS**

A Schedule to the Regulations sets out a number of ergonomic features that should be present in workstations installed after 1 January 1993. You can use the checklist to guide you if you are introducing new equipment. Manufacturers and suppliers can help, but remember that you as the employer have the duty to ensure items comply.

Once the new workstation is set up in the workplace, complete a risk assessment and take action to reduce any risks as in STEP 3.

Workstations in place in your company before 1 January 1993 must satisfy the Schedule by the end of 1996. But in practice, where the risk assessment has been properly completed and any necessary action taken to reduce risks as in STEP 3, little further action is likely to be needed.

YOU DON'T NEED TO MEASURE FURNITURE, TEMPERATURE, NOISE LEVELS, RADIATION ETC TO COMPLY WITH THE SCHEDULE. CHAIRS THAT DON'T ADJUST DO NOT NEED REPLACING UNTIL THE END OF 1996 UNLESS THEY DON'T 'FIT' THE USER. ADJUSTABLE TABLES ARE NOT A LEGAL REQUIREMENT.

HELP

OK

HELP

The Schedule covers broad design factors for furniture; the VDU hardware, software and accessories; and the workstation environment. It applies to equipment bought second-hand and new. It does not include detailed measurements and specifications or require that equipment complies with British or international standards (although if it does it will satisfy the the Schedule).

The questions in the first and last columns of the assessment checklist cover the requirements of the Schedule. If you answer 'Yes' in the second column and the equipment satisfies the questions in the last column, you are complying. Some questions - eg on reflections on the screen, or the **user's** comfort - can't be answered until the workstation has been installed. These will be covered in the risk assessment that you have to do once the workstation is installed. Follow STEP 3 to complete the assessment and reduce any risks you find.

There is a paragraph in the Schedule that describes when its detailed requirements need not apply:

- ☐ When the workstation doesn't have a particular item.



For example, not all workstations will have a document holder. Complying with the Schedule doesn't mean you have to have a document holder.

- ☐ When complying with the Schedule is not going to improve health and safety.

For example, some **users** may have certain back complaints that benefit from having a chair without a back. In this case providing a chair with a back as specified could do more harm than good.

- ☐ When the nature of the task makes it inappropriate.

For example, to preview page layout on screen, it may not be necessary for characters to be well defined because reading is not the priority.

A workstation moved within a company doesn't count as new, but the environmental factors will need reassessing when it is repositioned.

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STEP 7

 **INFORM USERS ABOUT WHAT YOU HAVE DONE**

HELP

OK

HELP

Give **users** information on:

- ☐ health and safety relating to their workstations;
- ☐ risk assessment and steps taken to reduce risks;
- ☐ breaks and changes of activity;
- ☐ eye and eyesight tests.

(For self-employed workers you will not need to cover the last two points.)

This can be done by:

- ☐ telling staff;
- ☐ putting information in staff instructions on health and safety;
- ☐ circulars;
- ☐ wall charts;
- ☐ computer based information systems (if staff are trained to use them).

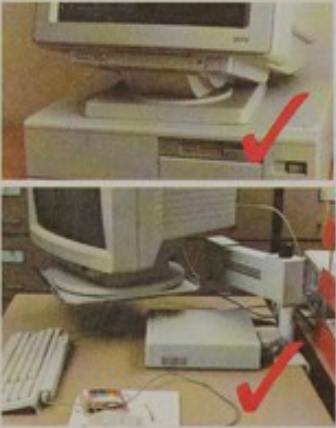
VDU WORKSTATION CHECKLIST FOR RISK ASSESSMENT AND COMPLYING WITH THE SCHEDULE TO THE REGULATIONS

Workstation number: (if applicable) _____ Date of assessment _____ Any further action needed?: YES/NO

User: _____ Follow up action completed on: _____



Checklist completed by: _____ Notes for completing: For risk assessments complete columns headed "risk factors" to "action completed" inclusive. Where the answer is 'Yes' in the second column, no further action is necessary.

Assessment checked by: _____ To check equipment complies with the Schedule, answer 'Yes' to questions in the first and last columns.






RISK FACTORS	TICK ANSWER		HELP	FURTHER ACTION IF NEEDED	ACTION COMPLETED	FURTHER POINTS TO SATISFY WHEN INTRODUCING EQUIPMENT
	YES	NO				
1 Is the display screen image clear? <input type="checkbox"/> Are the characters readable? <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: center;"> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; text-align: center;"> Health and Safety Executive </div> <div style="font-size: 2em; color: red;">✓</div> </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: center;"> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; text-align: center;"> Health and Safety Executive </div> <div style="font-size: 2em; color: blue;">✗</div> </div>			<input type="checkbox"/> Is the screen clean ? <input type="checkbox"/> May need supplier's help			
<input type="checkbox"/> Is the image free of flicker and movement? <input type="checkbox"/> Are the brightness and/or contrast adjustable? <input type="checkbox"/> Does the screen swivel and tilt? 			<input type="checkbox"/> Try different screen colour to reduce flicker <input type="checkbox"/> Still problems? Refer to equipment supplier <input type="checkbox"/> Separate adjustment may not be necessary on latest technology <input type="checkbox"/> Swivel and tilt need not be built in. Can you add a tilt mechanism? <input type="checkbox"/> If work is intensive, and user has problems, may need to replace			

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RISK FACTORS	TICK ANSWER YES NO	HELP	FURTHER ACTION IF NEEDED	ACTION COMPLETED	FURTHER POINTS TO SATISFY WHEN INTRODUCING EQUIPMENT
<input type="checkbox"/> Is the screen free from glare and reflections? 		<input type="checkbox"/> Use mirror placed in front of screen to check where reflections are coming from <input type="checkbox"/> Try to move the screen, desk or source of reflections <input type="checkbox"/> Adjust lighting or window coverings. Check that blinds work (vertical blinds are more effective than horizontal blinds). <input type="checkbox"/> If you have tried these suggestions, consider an anti-glare screen filter or seek specialist help			<input type="checkbox"/> Is the screen surface low reflectance material?
2 Is the keyboard comfortable?					
<input type="checkbox"/> Is the keyboard tiltable? <input type="checkbox"/> Can you find a comfortable keying position?  <input type="checkbox"/> Is there enough space to rest hands in front of the keyboard? <input type="checkbox"/> Is the keyboard glare free? <input type="checkbox"/> Are the characters on the keys easily readable?		<input type="checkbox"/> Tilt need not be built in <input type="checkbox"/> Is the user keying properly? ○ hands shouldn't be bent up at the wrist ○ is user applying a soft touch on the keys? ○ is the user overstretching the fingers? <input type="checkbox"/> Is the keyboard separate from the screen? <input type="checkbox"/> Does the keyboard need repositioning? If not separate from the screen, may need replacing <input type="checkbox"/> Can VDU monitor be pushed further back? (see 3 below) <input type="checkbox"/> Seek supplier's help <input type="checkbox"/> Keyboard may need cleaning, modifying or replacing			



RISK FACTORS	TICK ANSWER YES NO	HELP	FURTHER ACTION IF NEEDED	ACTION COMPLETED	FURTHER POINTS TO SATISFY WHEN INTRODUCING EQUIPMENT
<p>3 Does the furniture 'fit' the work and the user?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Is the work surface large enough for documents, monitor, keyboard, etc?</p>  <p><input type="checkbox"/> Is the surface free of glare reflections?</p>  <p><input type="checkbox"/> Is the chair stable?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Do the adjustment mechanisms work?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Are you comfortable?</p>   		<p><input type="checkbox"/> Can printer/files etc go elsewhere to make more room?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Is the user making repeated or awkward stretching movements?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Can you rearrange equipment, paper or work to avoid discomfort?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> May need to provide more space or resite sockets</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Consider mats or blotters for larger areas</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Contact the supplier</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> It may need repair or replacing in 1996 if it does not adjust. If the user is uncomfortable it may need replacing now</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Is the user sitting properly? Try adjusting chair</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> are arms horizontal and eyes at roughly the same height as the top of the VDU casing? <input type="radio"/> are feet flat on the floor? <input type="radio"/> too much pressure on backs of legs and knees may mean a foot rest is needed <input type="radio"/> is the small of the back supported by the chair? <input type="radio"/> is the back straight, but supported and shoulders relaxed, or is user leaning forward? <input type="radio"/> are arms of chair (if any) preventing user getting close enough to key comfortably? <p><input type="checkbox"/> Are there obstructions under the desk that need to be moved?</p>			<p><input type="checkbox"/> Is it large enough to take all of the necessary equipment, keyboard etc in a variety of layouts?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Does the workstation furniture have a low reflectance surface?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Does it swivel?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Does the seat height adjust?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Does the seat back adjust in height and tilt?</p>

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RISK FACTORS	TICK ANSWER YES NO	HELP	FURTHER ACTION IF NEEDED	ACTION COMPLETED	FURTHER POINTS TO SATISFY WHEN INTRODUCING EQUIPMENT
<p>4 Is the environment around the workstation risk-free?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Is there enough room to change position and vary movement?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Are the levels of light, heat and noise comfortable?</p>  <p><input type="checkbox"/> Does the air feel comfortable?</p>		<p><input type="checkbox"/> User needs space to fidget</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Will reorganising office layout help?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Check for obstructions</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Light could be too bright, or not bright enough to comfortably read by. Consider shading or repositioning light sources or consider more lighting, eg table light</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Can you distance user from sources of noise or heat (eg printer)? If not, consider sound-proofing or increase ventilation</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Equipment may dry the air: circulation of fresh air where possible, and plants may help</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Consider a humidifier if discomfort severe</p>			<p><input type="checkbox"/> Is there adequate room for the workstation?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Is it suitable lighting for VDU work?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Is it being sited in the best place?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Is equipment quiet?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> What about when a lot is in one area?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Will more equipment significantly raise the temperature?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> How will reasonable humidity be achieved?</p>
<p>5 Is the software user-friendly?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Can you comfortably use the software?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Has this checklist covered all of the comfort problems you might have working with your VDU?</p>		<p><input type="checkbox"/> Has the user had enough training?</p>			<p><input type="checkbox"/> Is the software suitable for the task?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Can it be easily used with appropriate training?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Does it give feedback, eg adequate help messages?</p>



FURTHER PUBLICATIONS AND SOURCES OF ADVICE

Publications:

- ☐ *Working with VDUs* IND(G) 36L 1993 From HSE Books in priced packs. Single copies are free.
- ☐ *Display Screen Equipment Work. Guidance on Regulations* L26 1993 £5 ISBN 0 7176 0410 1

Further copies of the checklist in this guide are available in priced packs from HSE Books.

Advice from Health and Safety Authorities:

- ☐ For businesses in office or retail premises, contact the Environmental Health Department at the local Council.
- ☐ For other premises, contact the nearest Health and Safety Executive Area Office, as listed in Yellow Pages.





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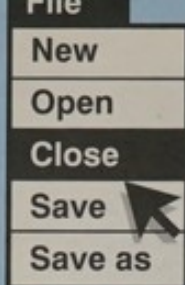
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