

Ergonomics for Telework - The Home Office

What is Telework and why is it happening?

Telework, or telecommuting, is a work arrangement where technology is used in place of commuter or business travel. It's typically performed at a home office. Telework is being adapted by companies as a new method to attract & retain valuable employees. Not everyone is right for telework; therefore screening should be conducted before beginning telework.

Ergonomic Concerns of Telework

- Lack of standardization & supervision = increase in reported injuries.
- Employee fears of losing telework status if injuries are reported may lead to unreported injuries.
- Home offices should be well defined to clarify when an injury is actually work-related.



Telework Agreements regarding Ergonomics & injury reporting should include:

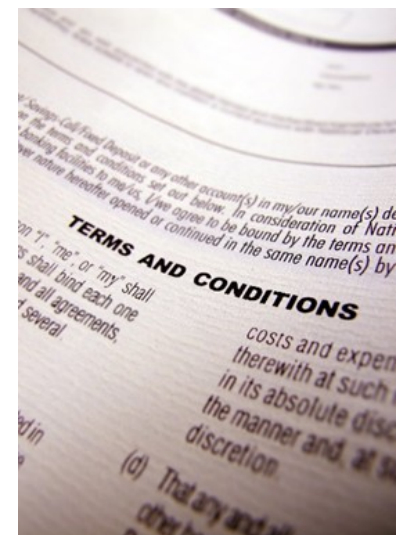
- Hours
- Schedules
- Methods for Communication
- Performance Evaluations
- Office Space
- Home Office Space Definition
- Equipment & Furnishings
- Care for dependents
- Adherence to policies

Telework Benefits

- Improves work/life balance
- Reduces commuting time
- Supports Green initiatives
- Increased employee productivity
- Decreased real estate costs
- Improved work opportunities for those with disabilities or in remote communities

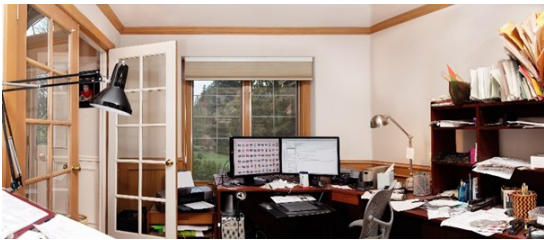
Telework Concerns

- Decreases in workplace exposure for staff
- Employers must develop new ways of managing employees
- Blurred lines between work & personal life
- Initial set-up costs increase employer short term costs
- Management of health & safety issues



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Criteria for a Home Office Space



Characteristics of the Home Office Space:

- Designated only for work
- Quiet space away from household traffic
- Area should be large enough for minimum of a 5ft wide desk & necessary storage furniture (i.e.: bookshelves, filing cabinets)

Education - Critical for employees working from home

- Educational seminars
- Online courses
- Self Adjustment tools

Educational tools should teach employees how to minimize injury risks through:

- Equipment adjustments
- Workstation arrangement
- Lifting and carrying techniques

Recommended Ergonomic Equipment

- Computer - Laptop for portability
- IT Devices (i.e. Telephone, Internet, Printer)
- Docking station and External monitor or a laptop riser
- External Input devices (i.e. keyboard & mouse)
- Desk with adequate space for work tasks
- Keyboard tray
- Supportive Computer Chair
- Storage (bookshelf, cabinet)
- Accessories (lighting, document holder, footrest)
- Travel Equipment (rolling cases, dollies)



References:

¹ Lister, L., Harnish, T. (2011). Workshift Canada: The bottom line on telework. White Paper. Telework Research Network.

² BIFMA G1-2013 (2013). Ergonomics guideline for furniture used in office work spaces designed for computer use. Business & Institutional Furniture Manufacturers Association.