Workstation Ergonomics

Frequently Asked Questions for Managers

Safety, Health & Wellbeing
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One of my staff member’s has told me they’re experiencing some pain or discomfort from using their workstation. What should I do?
Discuss with them about what may be causing the pain/discomfort to see if there is something you can immediately do to minimise this. This would include reviewing their Workstation Self-assessment Checklist and identifying any actions that may be required.

Ask them to formally record this in RiskWare within 24hrs as an “Incident” AND by selecting “Yes” to the question “Did an injury/illness occur?” The Injury Management Coordinator assigned to your organisational unit will then make contact with the injured person to help with the injury management process. Your plan of action (the ‘corrective action plan’ that you need to complete in RiskWare addressing your staff member’s/HDR student’s discomfort/injury) would ideally be informed by their Workstation Self-Assessment Checklist together with advice provided by your designated Injury Management Coordinator. This may include arranging the purchase of any additional equipment to help make the workstation safe.

If you haven’t done so recently, take the opportunity to remind all your staff of the online guidance material on ‘Setting up your workstation’ available on the Safety Health & Wellbeing website; and make sure they have completed the Workstation Self-Assessment Checklist.

What do I do if my staff member’s injuries prevent them from using RiskWare?
Arrange for someone else to record these injuries on the staff member’s behalf as soon as possible, preferably on the day the incident occurred. This is done by selecting “Another Person” in response to Question 1: “Who sustained this incident?”

Make sure they identify you as the “Assign to” “Manager/Supervisor” when asked by the system.

How do student’s records an injury that may have been sustained at their workstation in RiskWare?
Arrange for someone else to record these injuries in RiskWare on the student’s behalf as soon as possible (preferably on the day the incident occurred). This is done by selecting “Another Person” in response to Question 1: “Who sustained this incident?”

Make sure they identify you as the “Assign to” “Manager/Supervisor” when asked by the system.
What should I do if a member of staff or HDR student needs their workstation modified to accommodate a non-work related injury or illness?
Safety Health & Wellbeing also helps manage non-work related/pre-existing injuries and personal ill health for staff and HDR students. Have a discussion with your staff member/HDR student about the situation to see if there is something you can do to help minimise aggravation of the non-work related injury or illness. Recording the situation as a “Hazard” in RiskWare will alert the Injury Management team of the situation. This will result in your Injury Management Coordinator making contact with the injured/ill person. Ideally your plan of action (recorded in RiskWare) addressing your staff/HDR student’s situation would be informed by advice provided by your Injury Management Coordinator. This may include arranging purchase of any additional equipment to make the workstation safe.

What do I do once the Workstation Self-assessment Checklist is handed to me?
Simply review the checklist with your staff member or HDR student and identify any required actions. Sign the checklist, take a copy and ask the staff member to keep the original.

Can books be used to raise monitors to the correct height?
If books are used, make sure they are stable, on an even surface and are stacked to the right height as per the Workstation Self-assessment Checklist.

Can books or a box be used as a foot rest?
No, this practice is not recommended. A good footrest will be height adjustable to allow the ideal 90° bend in your legs whilst also allowing you to adjust your seat height correctly. Good ergonomic footrests will also have an angle adjustment to maximise comfort.

Where do I purchase additional workstation equipment and who pays for this?
The self-assessment may highlight shortfalls with a staff member’s workstation. This may include the need to purchase additional equipment to help make their workstation safer and more comfortable.

Any additional equipment that may be required such as chairs, monitor stands, footrests, and alternative desks needs to be sourced and paid for through your organisational unit’s normal procurement procedures. As with other expenses incurred for work activities, managers need to budget for additional workstation equipment.

If you have any questions sourcing specialist equipment please contact Injury Management Services at injury.management@sydney.edu.au

My staff member has asked for a sit to stand workstation. What do I do?
Purchasing and funding desks is a decision made by management in your organisational unit as with any other equipment. An assessment by Safety Health & Wellbeing (the Injury management team) is not required to purchase a sit to stand desk. There is a wide range of sit to stand workstations on the market. This link provides advice on the pros and cons of the most common types. The most appropriate type of sit to stand workstation will vary for each individual. The Injury Management team are available to provide specific expert advice on the types of equipment available including sit to stand desks as required.