



HS Broadcast – Display Screen Equipment (DSE)

I am aware that some organisations, in an attempt to manage their legal duties under the Health and Safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regulations 1992 (DSE Regs) are issuing staff who use DSE with a questionnaire that can be downloaded from the Internet.

However, just handing out an assessment questionnaire or having a couple of individuals complete the questionnaire on behalf of everyone else does not satisfy an employer's legal duty. Your staff **must** be able to seek assistance if required and as with all risk assessments these should be carried out by a competent person. Health & Safety legislation does not give a clear definition of a "competent person" but the onus is on the employer to ensure that the risk assessment is carried out by a "competent person". Acquiring a risk assessing qualification would be my benchmark, whereas simply working at a work station for a number of years without having an understanding of ergonomics would not be.

If you are going to use a questionnaire then the employer should have appropriate systems in place to ensure that any issues raised on the form are dealt with immediately. If these relate to the work station then an experienced Health & Safety individual should be able to assist, if it relates to ergonomics then a suitably qualified Health & Safety individual should be able to assist and in the case of pre-existing injuries than the service of an Occupational Health Therapist will be of great benefit.

Handing out simple questionnaires does not ensure an adequate risk assessment as some staff may simply complete the document as quickly as possible and not pay much, if any, attention to the content. The results may be that some staff may start to take time off as a result of problems that could have been prevented had they done the assessment properly. Certainly, a questionnaire as a means of a risk assessment must not be used when the DSE user has any form of musculo-skeletal injury.

If you do hand out questionnaires then issues must be followed up, again by a competent person. Please remember you could face enforcement action for not fully complying with the law; and civil action could result from staff if they can prove that your inaction has caused them to suffer either an injury or medical condition.

So my advice is;

1. Have the DSE risk assessment undertaken by a competent person, preferably qualified.
2. Make it clear to staff who they should report any problems to and who to turn to if they need help as regards work stations.
3. If you do hand out a simple questionnaire make it clear that completing the document is a legal requirement for both the employee and



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employer and is only a first step in the process.

4. Make sure staff realise that only by completing the assessment properly themselves, will they improve their own workstation, and they will be the one who will benefit most from doing it.
5. Be clear that you want to be informed of any issues and that raising problems will not be held against them.
6. Never, ever assume that just because staff state that everything is OK with their workstation, you can simply file the assessment away and be done with it. A check should be made, by a competent person to see that the workstation is set up properly. This could be as simple as a walk through your workplace, looking at basics such as the screen height, and keyboards being close to the user.
7. If staff request an item to help them such as a wrist rest or a foot rest, do not order it without checking that there is a genuine need first and if there is then do not delay in having the item delivered and used promptly.