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isplay Screen Equipment Regulations

The Health and Safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regulations 1992 (more commonly referred to as DSE) implement an EC Directive and came into effect from 1993 although some small changes were made in 2002. The Regulations set specific legal requirements and the practical measures for the provision, and safe and healthy use of Display Screen Equipment, including computers and some types of cash registers and scientific instruments. The regulations place a specific duty of care on the part on both employers and employees.

The Regulations apply where staff habitually use visual display units (VDUs) as a significant part of their normal work. The term VDU covers all kinds of display screens, usually meaning part of a computer used to show text, numbers or graphics including cathode ray tube and the flat screen displays including those used in laptop computers. However the Regulations cover more than the VDU alone and apply to the whole workstation, job, work environment, keyboard and other associated equipment as well.

The critical part of the Regulations for most facility managers is the need to carry out workstation risk assessments covering the whole workstation including equipment, furniture, environment and special needs of individual staff. Where risks are identified steps must be taken to reduce them. Workstations must meet minimum requirements which are set out in a schedule to the Regulations. These include all the features normally found in a workstation, such as adjustable chairs, screens and suitable lighting. Users should be provided with appropriate information about the risks of VDU working and adequate training in the use of their workstation.

Employees covered by the Regulations can ask their employer to provide and pay for an eye and eyesight test. This is a test by an optometrist or doctor. There is also an entitlement to further tests at regular intervals; the optometrist doing the first test can recommend when the next should be. Employers only have to pay for spectacles if special ones (for example, prescribed for the distance at which the screen is viewed) are needed and normal ones cannot be used.

A number of guides and advice on the Regulations and how to carry out DSE assessments are available from the HSE website www.hse.gov.uk