

Home Working

Homeworkers are those people employed to work at home for an employer.

The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 places duties on employers, the self-employed and employees. Employers have a duty to protect the health, safety and welfare of their employees, including Homeworkers. Most of the health & safety Regulations also apply to Homeworkers. These include, for example, the Management of Health & Safety at Work Regulations 1992, the Display Screen Equipment Regulations 1992, the Manual Handling Operations Regulations 1992, the Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1992 and the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 1994 (COSHH)

These regulations require risk assessments to be carried out of the work activities carried out by Homeworkers.

To do this the employer needs to:

- ❖ Identify the Hazards – anything with the potential to cause harm, relating to the work activity.
Look at what can cause harm to the homeworker, or other people, as a result of the work being done at home. To do this the employer may need to visit the homeworker at home. The homeworker should also advise the employers of the hazards.
- ❖ Decide who might be harmed and how.
Who may be affected by the work done at home and how are they affected. This may include the homeworker and the household e.g. Children.
- ❖ Decide the Risk – the likelihood of the Hazard actually causing harm.
If a Hazard is identified and it causes a risk to the homeworker or others, the employer needs to decide what steps to take to eliminate or reduce the risk.
- ❖ Record the findings of the risk assessment and the controls introduced.
Employers who have 5 or more employees, including homeworkers, need to record the significant finds of the risk assessment. They also need to record the controls they have taken to eliminate or reduce the risks.
- ❖ Check the risks regularly and take further action as necessary.
The risk assessment should be checked from time to time to see if it is still valid. It is particularly important when there is a change in working practices. The assessment needs to take into account any new hazards, which may affect the homeworker or the household.

Some common Hazards

The use of work equipment at home

Is the equipment correct for the job?

Is proper information and training given on how to use it?

Is the equipment checked regularly by a competent person and kept in a safe condition?

Does the equipment have the necessary guards?

Has the necessary personal protective equipment been provided?
Are the controls correct?
Are checks on the equipment carried out safely?

Handling Loads

Are loads heavy, bulky, and difficult to handle?
Awkward to lift?
Require pushing or pulling?
Repetitive handling without sufficient rest between the activity?
Require twisting & stooping?

Use of Electrical equipment at home

Is the equipment turned off before it is checked?
Are plugs checked to see if they are damaged, correctly wired and maintained?
Is the domestic system checked?
Are the cable grips checked and the outer covering of the plug checked?
Are leads, wires or cables checked for damage?
Is electrical equipment, which is likely to cause harm repaired?
Are trailing wires secured?

Use of Substances

Are they flammable, toxic, or corrosive?
Do they give off fumes?
Are they stored safely?
Does anybody suffer from dizziness, feel sick or have headaches from their use?
Does anyone suffer from skin irritation?
Does anyone suffer from asthma?

Working with Computers

Is the screen clear and readable, and free from flicker?
Is the screen free from glare and reflections?
Are the brightness and contrast controls properly adjusted to prevent eyestrain?
Is there suitable lighting?
Is the keyboard placed in the right position to allow the homeworker to work comfortably?
Is the screen and keyboard clean?
Can the chair be adjusted to the right height to work comfortably?
Is the computer placed at the right angle on the desk to allow work to be done comfortably?
Is there enough space under the desk to allow free movement?
Is there enough space in general so that the homeworker can move freely between the work on the desk and the computer?

Additional information

When assessing the risks the employer shall have regard for those who are new or expectant mothers. The risks include those to the unborn child or to the child, which is being breast-fed.

Employers need to ensure that adequate first aid provision is made for homeworkers.

Trade Union Safety Representatives can represent homeworkers in health & safety matters.

Under the Trade Union Reform & Employment Rights Act 1993, employees including homeworkers can stop work in the event of serious or imminent danger arising from the work that they are doing.

All employees, however, have a duty to report all faults, which may be a hazard to their safety or that of others.

The accident reporting requirements include homeworkers and the employer should ensure that incidents to these employees are reported.