ADMINISTRATIVE PRACTICES MANUAL

SAFETY MANUAL – COMPUTER WORKSTATIONS & OFFICE SAFETY:

1.0 Scope and Application

This policy has been developed to provide for an ergonomically correct working position when using computer workstations and general office safety. This policy applies to all workstations and complies with Chapter SPS 332 (Public Employee Safety and Health) of the Wisconsin Administrative code as promulgated by the Wisconsin Department of Safety and Professional Services.

2.0 Responsibilities

Risk Management: Support and management of this policy.
Department Heads: Ensure workstations comply with these requirements.
Supervisors: Ensure policy is adhered to by all employees.
Employees: Follow requirements contained in this policy.

All employees are responsible for complying with the requirements contained in this policy. Failure to abide by these requirements may subject the employee to disciplinary action, up to and including discharge.

3.0 Departmental Polices and Requirements

This policy represents minimum requirements related to computer workstations and office safety guidelines. Individual departments may implement more protective measures.

4.0 Definitions

Ergonomics - the science of designing the job, equipment, and workplace to fit the worker.

5.0 Training

Employees who use a computer will receive instruction in this policy at their time of assignment and whenever this policy is revised.

Documentation Requirements

None.

6.0 Workstation Design

A workstation should provide an employee with a comfortable sitting position sufficiently flexible to reach, use, and look at the screen, keyboard, and documents. In order to minimize fatigue, the following guidelines should be implemented:

a) Back Region Support – The seat and backrest of the chair should support a comfortable posture permitting occasional variations in sitting position. Chair height and back rest angle should be adjustable. A foot rest may provide support to the lower back region.

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b) Arms – When the hands are resting on the keyboard, the upper arm and forearm should form a right angle and the hands should form a straight line with the forearm.

c) Legs and Feet – The chair height is correct when the sole of the foot can rest on the floor or footrest and the back of the knee is slightly higher than the seat of the chair. This allows the blood to circulate freely in the legs and feet.

d) Screen Adjustments – The screen to the display terminal or monitor should be able to tilt or swivel vertically in order to enable the employee to select the optimum viewing angle.

e) Eye and Screen – The topmost line of the display should not be higher than the user's eye. The screen and document should be the same distance from the eye in order to avoid constant changes of focus.

f) Document Holder – A vertical document holder should be utilized to allow for a comfortable position that relieves straining on the eyes and neck when typing from a document.
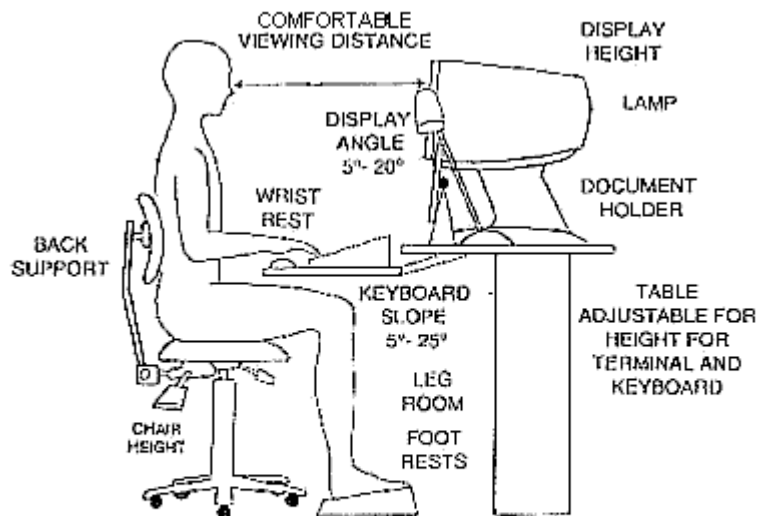

Diagram from "Ergonomics and VDT Use," flyer prepared by the Library of Congress Collections Services VDT Ergonomics Committee, 1991-92.

7.0 Lighting

Workstations and lighting should be arranged to avoid reflections on the display screen of surrounding surfaces and objects. Light should be directed so that it does not shine in the employee's eyes when looking at the screen. Glare can result from light reflecting on a display screen or shiny keyboard. Anti-reflective screen treatments can be added to a video display screen.

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LCD monitors provide a matte finish and anti-glare screen. To avoid glare, display screens and monitors may be placed near a window so the line of sight between the eye and the screen is parallel to the window surface.

8.0 General office safety

a) Care of Work Station **-** It is each employee's responsibility to keep their work station neat and free from clutter. Furniture such as tables, desks, and chairs must be maintained in good condition and be free from sharp corners, projecting edges, wobbly legs, etc. Report any loose or rough floor covering to your Supervisor.

b) File Drawers - All file, desk, or table drawers are to be kept closed when not in use. Never open more than one file cabinet drawer at the same time. As soon as you leave, close them. Never overload top cabinet drawers.

c) Ladders - Never use chairs, desks, tables, or other office furniture in place of a ladder or as a makeshift ladder. Use a step ladder. If there is no step ladder available, inform your Supervisor so that one can be purchased if needed. Don't overreach and lose your balance.

d) Chairs - Employees should not recline in office chairs if chairs are not equipped to recline.

e) Doors and blind corners - Be cautious when approaching a door that can be pushed toward you. Take it easy when pushing a door open and slow down when coming to a blind corner.

f) Paper cutters and office utensils - Care should be exercised when using and storing scissors, paper cutters, razor blades, etc. Keep the blades of paper cutters closed when not in use. Also make sure paper cutters are equipped with guards. Use a sponge or other wetting device for sealing envelopes. Use rubber finger guards when working with stacks of paper.

g) Office electrical - When removing an electrical plug from a receptacle, pull by the plug and not the cord. Ensure equipment is grounded and that the cord is in good condition. If a machine gives you a shock or starts smoking, unplug it and report it to your supervisor. Where appropriate, all equipment should be turned off when unattended or not in use. Electrical cords should be placed to avoid creating a trip hazard. If a cord must cross a pedestrian walkway, it should be enclosed in an appropriate track and secured to the floor. Extension cords are not allowed to be used for heating equipment. Frayed, worn, or broken electrical cords should immediately be reported to your Supervisor.

h) Accessory devices - The use of accessory devices for personal work areas such as space heaters and fans, must be pre-approved for use by a supervisor. Such devices must be UL rated and have adequate safety features to prevent a fire. For example, portable electric space heaters must be equipped with a grill and automatic shut-off protection and a tip-over switch.

i) Electrical power switches - Electrical power strips are designed to be used for low amperage accessories such as computer equipment, desktop printers and other peripheral equipment. Power strips are not designed for plugging in appliances or heating equipment. (i.e. heaters, toasters, microwave ovens, coffee pots etc.)

End Policy