

RISK INFORMATION – CHURCHES WORKING FROM HOME

It is common for churches to enter into formal arrangements for some church workers to operate for all or part of their time from their home or some other location than their church office.

As employers, churches have a legal and moral obligation to ensure that their workers are provided with a safe workplace. The same safety standards apply to both home offices and to church based offices.

Apart from any moral or spiritual considerations, failure to provide safe working conditions for church workers will expose a church and its leadership to the penalty provisions of Work Health & Safety (and Occupational Health & Safety) legislation. At a minimum, churches should provide guidance to workers on matters to be addressed in setting up a home based office. This should be enhanced by independent physical checks for paid workers.

This document sets out topics to be considered in determining if a home based workplace is safe. It is intended to apply in those situations where a worker has a formal agreement with a church employer to work from home (or some other location). The principles outlined should also be considered by workers who work from home on an occasional or private capacity.

Ergonomic arrangements

- Is the workstation properly configured – seat height, screen height, footrest etc.?
 - Adequate leg space under the workstation
 - Cables stowed away
 - Chair height, seat tilt, angle and back rest all adjustable
 - Chair adequately padded, has lumbar support
 - Worker sits on chair with arms at right angles while resting on the keyboard
 - Keyboard position is flat with mouse on same level as keyboard and directly next to the keyboard
 - Monitor between 350 to 750mm from face; screen height slightly lower than eye height; positioned to minimise glare
- Has the worker been instructed in the correct posture to adopt while working?
- Does the worker know to take regular breaks from screen-based activities?
- Is the “office” separate from other hazardous areas of the home, for example, the kitchen?
- Is the workspace a non-smoking environment?
- Is a telephone available?

The information provided is of a general nature only and may not identify all matters that need to be included in the design of effective controls for the subject area. Professional advice should be obtained on individual circumstances.

RISK INFORMATION – CHURCHES WORKING FROM HOME

Trip, Slip and Fall Hazards

- Is there evidence of any unsecured extension or power cords?
- Have all obvious trip and slip hazards been removed?
- Are pathways and steps clear from hazards?

Carrying Loads

- Have workers been instructed not to carry unsuitable loads when working for the church, whether at home or the main location?

Emergency Exit / Access

- Are entrances and exit points clear of obstructions (facilitating exit at time of emergency)?

First Aid and Emergency Arrangements

- Does the home workplace have a fully equipped first aid kit?
- Does the worker know what to do in the event of a medical emergency?
- Is a working fire extinguisher available?

Climate Control

- Does the workspace provide for worker comfort in the event of extreme weather conditions, e.g. heating and air conditioning?

Electrical Safety

- Is there any evidence of cracked or damaged light switches or power points?
- Are there sufficient power points for the equipment being used by the worker? Use of power boards and double adaptors should be minimised.
- Is all electrical equipment used by the worker safe, as evidenced by current “test and tag” documentation?

Worker Security

- Are fire risks appropriately managed, includes: extinguishers, smoke alarms, emergency egress points?
- Does the home office provide measures to restrict access to authorised people?

External Noise

- Are noises measured to ensure that workers are not subject to levels that are dangerous to hearing health?

The information provided is of a general nature only and may not identify all matters that need to be included in the design of effective controls for the subject area. Professional advice should be obtained on individual circumstances.

RISK INFORMATION – CHURCHES WORKING FROM HOME

Incident Reporting

- Is the home-based worker required to complete incident reports as if he/she was in the office environment?
- Are emergency contact details available to both the worker and his/her supervisor?

Data Security

- Are arrangements in place for back-up of programs and data used / accessed by the worker at home?
- If a home based computer is used, are access controls the same as for office based computers?
- Is the home virus protection the same as office based protection?
- If the worker accesses office based servers, are appropriate controls in place to restrict access to approved resources?

Checking

- Has the worker confirmed in writing that minimum workstation conditions have been adopted?
- Do you have a process in place to independently verify the workstation set-up?