LEAFLET 17

OFFICE SAFETY

CONTENTS

Para

LEAFLET FOR LINE MANAGERS

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

1   The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974; established the basic duty that all employers have a fundamental duty to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of their employees and that of other workers and members of the public.

DEFINITIONS

Line Manager

2   Line Manager means all staff, both Service and Civilian, who have authority and responsibility for directing and supervising people working for them, be they permanent, temporary or contractually employed.

Office

3   Office means an area; room or building within in which the predominant work activity is of a clerical or administrative nature.

DUTIES

Line Manager

4   Line Managers must ensure that any significant risks faced by office workers are assessed and controlled and that staff are informed of these risks and are competent to carry out their duties.

5   Line Managers shall monitor the control measures introduced to ensure they are effective.

Member of Staff

6   Members of staff must co-operate with their line managers and bring to their attention any concerns that they may have about any workplace health and safety issues.

GUIDANCE

7   The Annexes to this Leaflet guide Line Managers of the actions required to ensure health and safety in most office situations. It includes a checklist on the core health and safety duties for managers in an office environment.

RECORDS

8   There are no additional records other than those required by the general risk assessment process or within any other leaflet which specifically deals with an identified work topic

RELATED LEAFLETS

9   Related Leaflets

- Leaflet - Health and Safety Risk Assessment
- Leaflet - Working with Display Screen Equipment
- Leaflet - Manual Handling
- Leaflet - Safety when working with Electricity and Electrical Equipment
- Leaflet - First Aid at Work
- Leaflet - Substances Hazardous to Health

LEAFLET 17 ANNEX A

OFFICE SAFETY

CONTENTS

Para

GUIDANCE FOR LINE MANAGERS

INTRODUCTION

1   The aim of this leaflet is to introduce guidance for the managers of staff involved in office activities on how their legal and moral duty to their staff may be discharged.   Offices are usually seen as 'safe' environments, but they have their own hazards ranging from stress to Work Related Upper Limb Disorders (WRULD). People who work in offices use, or are exposed to, a range of equipment that are exclusive to this environment and include VDU's, offices machinery and other electrical equipment.

2   This leads to a consideration of issues such as ergonomics and the physical environment in which people work.   Workers in this environment tend to be more exposed to health risks than hazards threatening physical injury. Managing health risks is as important as managing physical risks and in offices perhaps more so. The long-term effects of failing to do so can be severe, permanent and costly both to the individual and the MOD.

LEGAL

3   There is, therefore, a need for managers to ensure that safe systems of work are in place and effective for office activities after considering the hazards and risk involved. Such hazard and risk evaluation is a requirement under the broader duties of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 (HSWA) and the explicit requirements of the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999. The Health and Safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regulations set out the minimum ergonomic requirements for workstations while the Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations deal with lighting, space and ventilation issues. Other specific regulations deal with manual handling, electrical, working time and first aid issues etc.

4   There is also a legal duty under the HSWA on all employees to take reasonable care of themselves and others who may be affected by their acts or omissions at work. Other legislation also places duties on employees to co-operate with their employer on health and safety matters so that employers can discharge the duty placed upon them by the law. Many of the issues discussed within this guidance are themselves the subject of their own leaflet within this JSP which should be seen as the definitive requirement on the subject, this leaflet merely seeks to bring of number of issues together in the context of the office environment.

SAFE WORKING ARRANGEMENTS FOR OFFICE WORK

5   The key to a healthy and safe workplace is the risk management process. This will enable hazards to be recognised and risks removed or controlled before an accident or ill health has occurred. The risk management process requires a thorough review of working practice to identify potential hazards, the identification of who and how people could be harmed, the assessment of risk and decisions made on how they could be reduced and the ongoing monitoring and review of the process.

6   The results of the assessment must explained to those who may be affected and be formally recorded as they may be needed to demonstrate that we have acted in a reasonable manner in protecting the health and safety of our workers.

TYPICAL OFFICE HAZARDS

7   The workstations and equipment used in offices can be hazardous for workers if their introduction and management is not adequately controlled.   The trip hazards that result from trailing cables or inconsiderately placed boxes or equipment is no less significant in an office than any other environment. The onset of musculoskeletal problems such as Work Related Upper Limb Disorder (WRULD) can result from staff working at DSE workstation that that have not been correctly adjusted for their needs. The increasing use of 'hot desking' in a number of areas can be seen as potentially aggravating this problem if it is not carefully managed.

8   The work environment can have an added number of potential hazards as the number of people and machines working in an area increases as well as having a substantial affect on the on the noise and heat levels. The light levels can also vary from worker to worker and from task to task. Although the paper less office has been long awaited it is yet to arrive and so adds to the hazards associated with manual handling in the office. These hazards should not be dismissed without due consideration (a full box of A4 photocopy paper can weigh approximately 11kg which falls within the range which might need to be assessed).

9   There will be few hazards from chemicals in most office but they may be present. The hazards for chemicals in the office environment should not be dismissed out of hand without first identifying the chemicals held, and their quantities. Remember that even it the office some substances may be made as a result of work. (Some laser printer can produce ozone, the manual will make recommendations on controlling the risks).

10   The hazards that result from poor work scheduling should not be dismissed without careful evaluation as long or irregular hours imposed by unrealistic targets can result in home life problems and personal security concerns about travel home. The stress that results may not be directly reported to line managers but could contribute to high absence or staff turnover rates.

RISK ASSESSMENT

11   The general hazards that you identify within you area and their associated risks should be assessed and recorded using the method detailed within Leaflet - Health and Safety Risk Assessment (A worked example for an administration area is included). The DSE risks need to be assessed and recorded using Leaflet - Working with Display Screen Equipment and the manual handling issues addressed using Leaflet - Manual Handling. The issues relating to chemical safety should be addressed using Leaflet - Substances Hazardous to Health.

REDUCING THE RISKS

12   The specific leaflets detailed above will help you assess the risks and develop the appropriate control measures. Do not be complacent in thinking that offices are 'hazard free zones' injuries from slips, trips and falls can, without management control, happen anywhere as can injuries from poor storage and amateur maintenance.

13   Line managers should be wary of imposing unrealistic targets, which can result in loss of motivation and stress. Targets must allow for regular breaks and staff should be made aware of their rights to take them. Line managers should also consider that a lack of control in the way they work can negatively affect staff and that a range of activities can improve motivation and reduce stress.

14   Workstation adjustment is an important factor in reducing risks, as is allowing staff the relief of carrying out other activities. It is therefore essential that every workstation be correctly set up for each individual user. The seat of the chair must b adjustable in both height and tilt and VDU's must be easily adjustable. In areas where 'hot-desking' is used these requirements are of even more importance, as the equipment must be easily adaptable for every user.

15   The minimum space that should be allowed is $11m^3$ per person (maximum height for this calculation is 3m) and the temperature and humidity must be comfortable. The air should be fresh or purified and air conditioning systems regularly maintained. Staff should have access to fresh water and noise levels should allow normal conversation and lighting be natural or localised.

16   The culture that the line manager's displays will set the tone and importance that the organisation places on health and safety, clear leadership is essential. A list of H&S requirements of an office based line manager is included at Annex B.

LEAFLET 17 ANNEX B

OFFICE SAFETY

H&S REQUIREMENTS OF AN OFFICE BASED LINE MANAGER

1   Is there a health and safety statement and arrangements that adequately covers my area and have I made sure that all my staff have seen and understood it?

2   Have the risk assessments been carried out for my area and are they current (Workplace, DSE, Manual Handling, Chemical) and have I made sure that my staff know the results?

3   Have any controls identified by the risk assessments been fully implemented?

4   Have I identified the health and safety training needs of my staff and placed actions to deliver it and ensure that the necessary level of supervision is always provided?

5   Do my staff know how to report accidents or any health and safety concerns that they may have and do I investigate as appropriate and know when to use JSP442?

6   Do I ensure that regular management safety inspections take place in my area?

7   Are contractors and visitors to an area controlled, and the requirements of Leaflet - The Management of Contractors and other Visiting Workers (including MOD agencies) within the MOD followed?

8   Can I demonstrate that I carry out the above?