

Workplace Health and Safety

Hazards

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- What is a Hazard
- Injuries caused by computer use
- Hazard Categories
- Hazard Identification

Hazard Identification

- Working at computer workstations for long periods of time:
 - What are the risks?
 - What are the hazards?
- Some questions we need to ask
 - Is working at a computer workstation dangerous?
 - Is it safe?
 - Is it unhealthy?
 - How does the length of time affect the risk?

Hazard: Definition

- A hazard is a source or potential source of human injury, ill health or disease
- Anything which might cause injury or ill health to *anyone* at or near a workplace is a hazard

Hazard Identification

- Broad hazard categories:
 - Mechanical hazards
 - Physical hazards
 - Chemical hazards
 - Psychological hazards
 - Electrical hazards

Mechanical Hazards

- Mechanical hazards include:
 - Filing cabinets that tend to tip when heavily laden top draws are open
 - Tripping hazards



Physical Hazards

- Physical hazards include:
 - Glare or reflections from screens
 - Hot components of photocopiers
 - Poorly designed chairs that do not provide adequate back support
 - Poorly designed jobs and tasks that demand prolonged work in a fixed posture



Chemical Hazards

- Chemical hazards include:
 - Vapours in the atmosphere
 - From paint, solvents, or airborne particles like photocopier toner
 - Corrosive or flammable liquids



Psychological Hazards

- Psychological hazards include:
 - The need to perform excessive workloads under pressure
 - Being bullied by a co-worker or supervisor
 - Lack of satisfaction from a job where there is inadequate recognition of work performed
 - Repetitive work and insufficient task variety

Electrical Hazards

- Electrical hazards include
 - Damaged electrical cords
 - Overloaded power outlets that may lead to the risk of electric shock



Injuries caused by computer use

- Eye strain
 - Main source of light not shining in your face / screen
 - Tilt screen to avoid glare
 - Screen not too close to face, at eye level
 - Reduce contrast / brightness of screen
 - Frequently look away / focus on faraway objects
 - Have regular eye exams

Injuries caused by computer use

- Muscle and joint problems
 - Caused by incorrect posture / incorrect furniture
- Obesity
- Photosensitive epileptic seizures
- Burns
 - From overheating laptops placed on lap

Psychosocial Factors at Work

- Factors that can have an adverse effect on health and wellbeing:
 - Stress
 - Bullying
 - Occupational violence
 - Fatigue
- Risks to psychological health due to work should be viewed in the same way as other health and safety risks

Hazard Identification

- Assess your workstation and environment and identify hazards
- Identify hazards in the virtual office:
http://www.comcare.gov.au/virtual_workplaces/virtual_office

Summary

- A hazard is a potential source of injury or ill-health
- There are several broad categories of hazard: mechanical, physical, chemical, psychological and electrical
- Even the relatively mundane task of operating a computer could be hazardous
- There are many non-obvious injuries that could be caused by computer use

References

- Commonwealth of Australia. 2008. *Officewise: A guide to health and safety in the office*. [ONLINE] Available at:https://www.comcare.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0006/39570/Officewise_OHS1_Apr_10.pdf. [Accessed 02 March 2016].