

Trending Issues in Worker Risks Associated with Increased Telecommuting



Workplace Safety & Health | Ergonomics

Many employers have quickly responded to the calls of social distancing to reduce the spread of the coronavirus (COVID-19) by allowing or even requiring employees to work from home. In some cases, companies are contemplating the impact of working from home for the first time. For others, an increase in telecommuting workers is an extension of an existing flexible workplace model.

With unprecedented numbers of telecommuting workers, companies should evaluate the potential for new risks to worker safety. Employers should also implement procedures to ensure that their employees have a safe working environment at home.

Office Ergonomics

Moving from a traditional, ergonomically designed office space to a home environment can be challenging. Finding a suitable work area may be difficult, particularly where employees balance having many, if not all their family members, home during this time. Employees who work from areas like couches, kitchen counters and beds could increase their ergonomic risk. If they are able, employees should instead choose a dedicated workspace where they can work comfortably with good ergonomics in mind.

Other factors to consider include workstation setup, well-defined working hours, the ability to focus in the environment, and the use of breaks to move and stretch.

All these considerations are key to helping employees work safely, comfortably and productively in a home-based environment.

Slip, Trip and Fall

As in any work environment, employees should review their walking surfaces and ensure that they are clear from slip, trip and fall hazards. They should look for cables, cords and other items, and reduce the risk of injury by tucking them away or taping them down.

Supporting Your Employees

Employers should think about how they can continue to support their employees to prevent injuries in their home-based work area. Consider work-related resources that an employee may need when transitioning to working from home. Recognize that in addition to the day-to-day work activities, working from home can require additional support not contemplated. Follow up with employees once they have started working at home.

Contact VSBIT for more information.