



Telecommuting

Working Safely from Home

Statistics show a flexible work from home schedule can result in higher employee satisfaction and productivity while reducing absenteeism and turnover. At the same time, telecommuting can minimize hazards such as the spread of communicable diseases in an office or traffic accidents in the morning commute, not to mention reducing air pollution.

Home-based Workplace Safety

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) has provided an Instruction ([Directive No. CPL 2-0.125](#)) which in summary states there are no specific U.S. regulations regarding home-based workplace safety. There are however plenty of ways to stay safe at home while working. In Canada, the Center for Occupational Health and Safety (CCOHS) offers a [fact sheet](#) with considerations for employers and employees on telecommuting. The following is an outline of areas to consider when setting up an at home workspace.

FURNITURE & EQUIPMENT

For starters, the workplace must be able to accommodate the equipment and documents to be used. The desk or table chosen to work on should be large enough to fit a desktop/laptop and sturdy enough to hold it. If necessary, extra space should be available for any physical documents used throughout the work day. Be sure no furniture prevents a safe and rapid egress in the event of an emergency. Just like in the office, exits should be clean and clear.

ERGONOMICS

- Choose a chair that is comfortable and, ideally, allows for adjustments. When sitting, feet should rest flat on the floor, back should be supported and seat depth should not impose on back of knees.
- Keyboard and mouse should be at a height where wrists can be kept in a neutral position. Elbows should be at a 90 degree angle and shoulders relaxed, not extended.
- Monitor(s) should be about an arm lengths away (18-24in) where your direct line of eyesight meets the top of the screen.
- Keep all frequently used documents and items, such as a phone, within a close reach.
- For a full ergonomic checklist, visit OSHA's [Computer Workstation eTool](#).

ELECTRICAL

Check to be sure an adequate number of outlets are in the workspace to accommodate the equipment being used. Outlets should be three-pronged ground configuration and when possible plug equipment in to surge protectors. Circuit capacity should not be overloaded. Avoid running cords across walkways; electrical cords and wires should not pose as a tripping hazard. Additionally, suitable ventilation for electrical components must be provided to prevent overheating. Keep liquids away from electronics to avoid accidental spills.

FIRE

Smoke detectors should be in working order and it is recommended a fire extinguisher be present and easily accessible. Electrical cords should be in good condition, not frayed and no exposed wires. If space heaters or hotplates are used, keep paper and other flammable materials away. These appliances should be turned off when employee leaves the workspace. Similarly, avoid using candles as they pose as an ignition source. Be familiar with primary and secondary escape routes at home, have a plan in case of emergency.

AIR QUALITY

Proper housekeeping measures should be taken to ensure adequate ventilation in the workspace, i.e. dusting and vacuuming. Avoid smoking in the workspace, it not only affects air quality but also presents a fire hazard.

LIGHTING

Adequate lighting should be available. Light is best directed down over your workspace. Windows should have curtains or blinds to make adjustments for natural lighting. Proper placement of monitor(s) or laptop should reduce potential glare. Remember brightness and contrast controls on monitors can be adjusted.

THEFT PREVENTION

Remote employees can host a large amount of valuable belongings, as well as data. It is important to practice good computer security - install virus software, use strong passwords and avoid pop-ups, unknown emails & links. It is just as important to look after your physical belongings by keeping files secure and locking doors to prevent against intruders.

HEALTH

- Don't forget to get up and move throughout the day. Working from home usually means the walk to the restroom is short, lunch is close by in the fridge and there are no long walks to the printer. Be sure to stretch and move throughout the day to keep your mind and body healthy.
- Drink water and give yourself time to eat. This may sound obvious, but without a designated lunch break you may forget to or get too distracted in your work to remember. Take the time to feed your body to keep your brain on task.
- Work space should be free of distractions. Having a specific location where work is completed at home provides a separation between work and home life. Make an effort to have a start and end to the work day. For example, replace the drive home from work with a walk outside to clear your head and conclude your work day.
- Lastly, be sure to keep a stocked first aid kit at home. Hopefully you never have to use it but you do not want to be caught without it.

Over the years, technology has advanced allowing many employers the option to offer telecommuting to their employees. The Global Workplace Analytics estimates upwards of 5 million employees, or 3.6% of the population, in 2020 works from home at least half of the time. By following the above guidelines, employees can work just as safely at home as they do in the office.

Get the latest information, guidance and resources on Coronavirus (COVID-19) to help you protect what matters most at hubinternational.com/coronavirus. For additional support, please reach out to your local HUB office.