

## MOBILE WORKING: BRIEFING FOR EMPLOYERS

### BACKGROUND

Mobile working, agile working, remote working, working from home; laptops; tablet; smartphones; cloud storage; 24 hour access and emerging technology all drives how business works today. This technology allows business to be flexible and makes work about what you do, not where you work. However, there are emerging health issues increasingly being linked to mobile technology including musculoskeletal disorders. These disorders can cause staff discomfort, reduced productivity, potential for litigation and potential sickness absence.

Technology has moved so fast that there is little guidance currently available for employers to help them to understand what the risks are and how to take action to reduce and control those risks.



### WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

The main risk associated with use of mobile devices is the poor posture people adopt when using the mobile devices. This tends to be neck tipped down and forward with associated hunched and rounded shoulders, combined with repetitive thumb, finger and wrist actions from swiping or tapping. Sustained periods of work in these postures are known to cause musculoskeletal disorders, predominantly in the neck and upper limbs. These disorders can cause high levels of pain and discomfort and ultimately result in staff taking sick time or being unable to work.

### WHAT IS THE SIZE OF THE PROBLEM?

- 14% increase (30,000 new reports) of MSDs in the neck and upper limbs between years 2013/14 and 2014/15. (HSE: 2015 Statistics report)
- 43% of all musculoskeletal disorders are in the neck and upper limbs – accounting for over 4 million working days lost annually (HSE: 2015 Statistics report)
- 74% of reported musculoskeletal problems affect the neck and/or shoulders. This is a 2009 figure which pre-dates Tablets and was taken at a lower smartphone market saturation (CSP: House of Lords briefing - 2012)

### WHAT IS THE LEGAL POSITION FOR EMPLOYERS?

Mobile devices are pieces of Display Screen Equipment and, when issued for and used as, a significant part of an employees work, the Display Screen Equipment (DSE) Regulations will apply. Many employers and commentators get confused between the Regulations themselves and the Guidance to the Regulations. It has been acknowledged that the HSE guidance document is dated now with old fashioned pictures and limited reference to new and mobile technology. The Regulations themselves are still fit for purpose and applicable to mobile working.

## WHAT DO EMPLOYERS HAVE TO DO?

Employers are required to assess the risk associated with mobile working and to take steps to reduce the risks identified to the lowest extent reasonably practicable.

There are some simple steps that can be taken and managing the risk should not be seen as onerous or as a burden, it should form an integral part of a business risk management plan.

## HOW CAN MOBILE OFFICE HELP?

### Mobile Office works with businesses to help them:

- Identify the ergonomics and health risks in the business associated with mobile working and use of mobile device
- Inform employees about the risks from mobile devices and what they need to do to reduce the risks
- Identify and put in place reasonably practicable risk control measures
- Comply with health and safety legislation

### Mobile Office offers the unique Mobile Working Risk Management System© which comprises:

- Our detailed 56 page guidance document on mobile working risks and how to manage them
- A template health and safety policy document for mobile working
- A comprehensive e-learning video
- An online competence assessment
- An online risk assessment
- A project tracker to check how your staff are progressing with the roll-out of the assessments
- Risk assessment report and competence certificate for each employee
- Access to our LinkedIn private client forum for exchange of ideas
- Regular mobile working newsletter with updates and ideas for risk management

### Mobile Office can also offer:

- Management audits to assess existing mobile working management with practical and pragmatic advice on a phased risk management approach
- Training
  - Train the trainer training, to allow businesses to increase competency to allow mobile working management to be integrated into the risk management process on site
  - Training for employees as part of a roll out of risk control measures
- Impartial advice on equipment

## MORE INFORMATION?

If you, or people working for you, use mobile devices (laptops, tablets, smartphones etc) to do significant amounts of work on, our website provides more guidance and tells you about our Mobile Working Risk Management System.©

Follow our social media pages for tips, product ideas and the latest mobile working news.



## MORE INFORMATION?

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