

WORKING FROM HOME

Staying safe, a guide for employers

20 March 2020

The coronavirus pandemic has quickly had a significant impact on the way that we work. Recent social distancing measures have resulted in many employers moving their staff to a 'work from home' environment, whether they were ready or not.

LGIS have prepared the following seven (7) tips on working from home and staying safe addressing the immediate areas that employers need to think about. Members may wish to conduct a more thorough working from home checklist - available to download - at a later date.

It's important to remember that employers have an obligation to make sure that their employees have a safe work environment. They need to take all reasonable steps to ensure their employees are safe and that individuals are equipped with the knowledge to also look after their own safety.

There are three areas that need to be considered when quickly setting up a safe workspace at home:

1. COMMUNICATION

- **Check-in:** Establish a procedure for the manager and worker to check-in with each other, confirming that the home worker is safe and well and not experiencing any issues. If issues are identified then working arrangements should be reviewed. Managers should regularly check-in on their employees' well-being, either during team meetings or on an individual basis. Now, more than ever, employees need your support and guidance.
- **Emergency communication:** Telephone or other communication devices are readily available to allow effective communication in an emergency situation
- **Incidents:** Any safety incidents will be reported using the business' incident reporting system

2. WORKPLACE & HOME SAFETY

- **Power:** Do not overload electrical outlets to avoid fire risk.
- **Trip hazards:** Identify and reduce any other trip hazards in the area. Be aware of your extension/power cords to minimize tripping hazards.
- **Emergency:** Emergency contact numbers and details are known, i.e. 000 for fire, ambulance or police
- **First aid:** Ensure first aid supplies are available and accessible

- **Smoke detector:** make sure a smoke detector is installed in/near the designated work area and is properly maintained
- **Safe storage:** Keep your laptop and equipment in a secure place after hours that can be protected from damage or theft.

3. ERGONOMICS

- **The chair:** Use a sturdy chair that can be adjusted where possible. Refrain from sitting on very soft couches and chairs as they do not support the body evenly during extended sitting.
- **Set-up:** Adjust seating height where possible, so your forearms are parallel to the floor when typing and your hips are not lower than your knees. If you cannot adjust your chair and your feet cannot firmly touch the ground, use a book or ream of paper to raise your feet to the correct height.
- **Support:** Place a small pillow behind your lower back while sitting to maintain the natural curve of your spine.
- **Desktop:** Use an external mouse and place objects — such as your phone, mouse, and printed materials — close to your body to minimize reaching.
- **Monitor:** Use your monitor. If this is not possible place your laptop on a riser/block/paper ream; the top of screens need to be at eye level.
- **Useable space:** Ensure there is sufficient usable space on your designated working surface.
- **Breaks:** Take short micro-breaks (approximately two minutes in length) every hour to stretch and move your body. If you have phone calls to make, get up and walk around your house or even outside!

With or without a pandemic, working from home is becoming more common, and for many employers and employees, it comes as a significant change. While telecommuting will likely be the norm for the next several weeks, employers should be patient with themselves and their employees as they navigate this new world of work.

For more information about working from home contact LGIS:

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