

Ergonomics – screen based equipment and your eyes >

Many workers experience eye and vision difficulties when using screen based equipment. This information bulletin outlines some basic considerations for improving the visual environment of your workstation.

Legislation

Regulation 60 of the [Work Health \(Occupational Health and Safety\) Regulations](#) requires the employer to ensure when designing, arranging and maintaining a workplace, that visual requirements of workers are taken into account.

Identifying eye and vision difficulties

Using screen based equipment is a visually demanding task, and can cause symptoms such as:

- eyestrain (sore eyes or eye fatigue),
- headache,
- blurred vision,
- slowness in changing the focus of the eyes,
- blurred distance vision after near work,
- glare or light sensitivity,
- eye irritation (burning, dryness, redness),
- contact lens discomfort,
- neck and shoulder pain, and even
- back pain.

The visual capability of every person is different and therefore the work environment will require some form of individual assessment. NT WorkSafe Information Bulletins WH 06.01.02 to WH 06.01.06 outline how you should set up your workstation to suit your needs.

Some aspects of the visual environment require special consideration for workers who are experiencing problems. These include:

- ***Is the person wearing bifocal or multifocal lenses?***
These are designed for daily use and are generally not suitable for screen based use. A person using these lenses will usually need to adopt awkward postures in order to use the glasses.

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- ***Where is the computer screen located?***
In visually demanding jobs we naturally tend to position ourselves to improve eye comfort. In other words we let our eyes determine our posture. Information Bulletin WH 06.01.04 outlines how to adjust the position of your screen to suit your eyes and your posture.
- ***Is there glare on the screen?***
The decrease in contrast caused by glare on the screen makes it more difficult to maintain eye focus and coordination and aggravates some sight disorders. Information Bulletin 06.01.04 looks at positioning the screen to avoid glare. This should be attempted before trying an anti-reflection filter, however if you do choose to use a filter, the glass varieties tend to be better than the mesh varieties.
- ***Are there any bright lights in the workers peripheral vision?***
When using computers you look straight ahead and this can bring other lights into your peripheral vision. This can contribute to glare discomfort. Look at your screen and use your hands to shield any bright peripheral light. If you notice an immediate improvement, something should be done about the light. Turning off selected lights, reducing light levels, replacing diffusers to direct light differently, installing curtains and changing the orientation of the workstation are all possible solutions.
- ***Are there any complaints of irritated eyes or contact lens problems?***
Computer users tend to blink less than usual and this combined with the dehumidified air of an airconditioned office environment can lead to dry eyes. Air vents directing breezes toward the face can cause further problems. Artificial tears can help but if dry eye problems persist you should consult your doctor.
- ***Does the worker get visual rests?***
Maintaining the same focal length for long periods can be tiring. Information Bulletin WH 06.01.05 outlines some simple exercises for providing your eyes with a visual rest.

Whilst regular eye testing is a good idea, too often workers will seek glasses as the only solution to eye fatigue from screen based equipment. This can be an expensive alternative if the problem is not related to some physical visual deficit. Try some of the simple solutions outlined in this bulletin to see if your symptoms reduce.

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