

Work environment – **General information**

15.01.01

Working from home >

This information bulletin outlines some basic considerations for developing a policy to promote safe working from home.

Legislation

The Northern Territory [Workplace Health and Safety Act](#) outlines the responsibilities of employers to provide and maintain a safe workplace for workers and other people (Section 56). Having workers work from their homes does not relieve employers from this duty of care. A home based worker is entitled to work in an environment that is free from risk and is eligible for workers' compensation and rehabilitation just like any other worker.

Developing a working from home policy

Occupational health and safety is just one of many things an organisation must consider before introducing a working from home policy. Other issues such as professional isolation, communication, supervision, promotional opportunity, performance management, industrial award provisions, tax, mortgage and/or lease arrangements and even local government approvals may also need to be considered. For this reason, the policy you develop must reflect both your organisation's and the worker's needs.

It is important to consult carefully with workers when planning the introduction of work from home arrangements. It is advisable to put in writing agreed procedures regarding work arrangements, particularly those regarding hours of work.

With regard to safety, a workplace assessment is one way to identify hazards. An appropriately trained person should do the assessment. It should be confined to that part of the home that is used for work and worker amenities.

Checklist of issues that should be carefully considered before introducing home based work

Are the duties suitable for working from home?

Some jobs are not appropriate for home based work eg. jobs that can only be done safely using special equipment or by following work procedures not suitable to home based activity.

What equipment will be necessary for an employee to safely undertake home based work?

For example, is a suitable desk, chair and computer available? See NT WorkSafe information bulletin Series [06.01 Ergonomics](#). Are other items of equipment suitable for the work involved?

Is there a first aid kit provided which is suitable for the work being done?

Is the proposed working environment healthy and safe?

Is there sufficient lighting? Are smoke alarms and earth leakage protection fitted to the room where work is done? Are the exits kept clear? Are there sufficient power points to avoid overloading? Is there adequate ventilation?

putting safety first >



Are the amenities such as the bathroom, toilet and kitchen free of hazards?

Work breaks for coffee or to use the bathroom are considered a part of normal work and as such require safe access and facilities.

Has the person who will be working from home have the information and training they require to do the job safely?

For example is the home based worker who uses screen based equipment familiar with safe work practices to prevent overuse injuries? Keep in mind that when working from home the worker has less supervision and therefore may require more comprehensive training.

Have hours of work and communication procedures been agreed upon?

Establish days and hours during which work will be done and agree on procedures for recording work hours, including starting and finishing times. This will be important for workers' compensation purposes. (*Work Health has information bulletins that provide information on workers' compensation.*)

Do you need to revise your workplace rehabilitation program?

If a worker is injured you may wish to include a commitment to the provision of suitable duties at the main workplace as a rehabilitation strategy, or to clarify arrangements for monitoring work from home rehabilitation programs. See NT WorkSafe information bulletin Series [13 Rehabilitation and Compensation](#).

The information in this bulletin is reproduced with the kind permission of Workcover NSW and is based on their document "Working from Home".

NT WorkSafe >

GPO Box 1722

Darwin NT 0801

Telephone: 1800 019 115
Facsimile: (08) 8999 5141
Email: ntworksafe@nt.gov.au
Website: worksafe.nt.gov.au