Keeping Virtual Workers Safe & Healthy with Ergonomics



Many organizations have welcomed employees back to the office while incorporating a hybrid working model so that employees can work virtually from home a couple of days per week. Employers with employees working virtually from home should ensure they have policies and procedures in place for supporting the health & wellness of virtual workers.

In Ontario, home offices do not fall under the same jurisdiction as workplace offices and therefore do not have all of the same health & safety requirements; such as the requirement for the completion of health and safety inspections. However, if an organization has employees working from home, there is an expectation that they are equipped to safely do so. This includes, providing employees with the knowledge and resources to set up an ergonomic home office workstation.

Regardless of the physical location where an employee works, employers still have an obligation to protect the health and safety of their workers and no matter where an injury results, it is compensable.

Ergonomic Policies for Home Offices

Develop Policies and Procedures for working virtually from home that include:

- what equipment will be provided by employers

- what employees are expected to do in terms of equipment, workstation set-up, and any required training
- how ergonomics assessments are conducted
- how employees report issues or discomfort

In terms of equipment, employers can choose to provide two sets of equipment to employees ‘ one for their onsite office and one for their home office, or one set of portable equipment (external keyboard, mouse, laptop riser), with the provision of a chair or stipend to assist with the purchase a chair for home offices.

For employees using laptops as their main computer, they should be docked with peripherals (i.e., keyboard and mouse), and the screen should be raised to eye level, as per the Canadian Standards Association Guideline for Office Ergonomics (CSA Z412-17). Employees may also require equipment such as keyboard trays or footrests to help achieve correct working heights. Contact ERGO Inc. for a copy of our Laptop Set Up Toolkit Card.

An Ergonomic Assessment is a good first step to determine what an employee requires prior to purchasing equipment. Assessments can be conducted in a number of ways, including self-assessment checklists completed by employees, virtual coaching from a qualified individual or an In-person Ergonomics Assessment by a Certified Ergonomist, for complex situations.

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