

VDU Regulations : an easy guide for employees

Source: Health and Safety Authority

What is a VDU?

A VDU or Visual Display Unit within the scope of the VDU Regulations is an item of display screen equipment such as a computer screen or a microfiche reader.

Display screens for showing films, videos, television pictures or for surveillance purposes are not covered by these regulations.

What regulations apply?

The principal Regulations relating to the use of visual display units are made under Part VII of the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (General Application) Regulations, 1993. These are referred to as the VDU Regulations in this leaflet.

Do the regulations apply to me?

If you use a VDU for a significant part of the normal working day i.e. if you use the VDU for continuous periods of more than one hour then the VDU regulations apply to you.

What do the VDU regulations require?

If the Regulations apply to you, your employer is required to evaluate your health and safety at your workstation with particular reference to eyesight, physical difficulties and mental stress. Steps must be taken to control any risks to health and safety identified.

The employer must -

- Consult with you on all issues affecting health and safety.
- Identify those of you to whom the VDU Regulations apply and the workstations used.
- Carry out a risk assessment of these workstations. This must be done by someone with the necessary expertise. Somebody could be trained to help carry out this assessment or a consultant used.
- Provide suitable environment and equipment for VDU work.
- Organise work activity to include frequent breaks from VDU work.
- Provide eye tests if they are requested and glasses if needed for VDU work.
- Make sure new workstations comply with Regulations.
- Inform you of the hazards associated with VDUs and of what has been done to protect you.

Employees must -

- Co-operate with your employer on issues relating to health and safety.
- Use in a proper manner any appliance or equipment provided to secure your health and safety at work.

Where can I or my employer get more information?

More information is available from:

1. *Health and Safety Authority, Info-Tel, e-mail, our publications and the internet.*
2. *Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (General Application) Regulations 1993.*
3. *Guidelines on the Health and Safety of Office Workers.*

Am I at risk now?

Complete the following sample checklist to give an indication of whether your workstation presents a risk to your health and safety.

Answer "Yes" or "No" to the following questions.

1. Is the display screen image clear?
Are the characters readable?
Is the image free of flicker or movement?
Are the brightness and/or contrast adjustable?
Does the screen swivel and tilt?
Is the screen free from glare and reflections?
2. Is the keyboard comfortable?
Is the keyboard tiltable?
Can you find a comfortable keying position?
Is there enough space to rest hands in front of keyboard?
Is the keyboard glare free?
Are the characters on the keys easily readable?
3. Does the furniture 'fit' the work and the user?
Is the work surface large enough for document, monitor keyboard etc?
Is the surface free of glare reflections?
Is the chair stable?
Can the chair be adjusted?
Do the adjustment mechanisms work?
Is your posture comfortable?
4. Is the environment around the workstation risk free?
Is there enough space within which to work?
Are the levels of light, heat and noise comfortable?
Does the air feel comfortable?
5. Is the software user friendly?
Can you use the software without undue stress?

If you answer 'no' to any of the above then it is likely that your workstation does not comply with the VDU Regulations.

What can I do then?

You should approach your supervisor initially and express your concern. Your employer is obliged to carry out the steps outlined in this leaflet.

You are entitled under legislation to consult with your employer regarding these issues.