Loss Control Services

Helping Mitigate Risk when Employees Work from Home

Telecommuting, flex-hours, and virtual employees are quite common today. However, in response to the recommendation to practice social distancing during the COVID-19 outbreak, many employers are encouraging or even requiring employees to work from home. Employers can help employees create a safe and productive work environment.

Finding the right work environment while working from home can be important. Employees may want to Identify and dedicate a work space – a desk, a table, a spare room – to help define the workday and work schedule. Working on the floor, on the sofa, or sitting on a bed for long periods of time can get uncomfortable resulting in stiffness, aches and pain.

Setting up a work area, properly adjusting/placing equipment, and practicing good habits can all assist in helping to prevent the body from feeling over-stressed. Here are some tips that can be shared with employees to help set up a workstation at home:

- Find a table or desk between 28-30 inches high.
- Use an external mouse and keyboard if available.
- If an adjustable chair is not available, use a small pillow to sit on and one to help support the lower back.
- Try to align the height of the keyboard to about the height of the elbows.
- Monitors should be about 18-20 inches or an arms-length away.

    When external monitors and adjustability choices are limited there are some helpful ideas to still keep comfortable.

    - Angle or raise the laptop monitor in a way to reduce turning the head or neck deviation
    - Set up short cuts on the keyboard to reduce strokes

- Practice good posture; leaning forward and slouching may seem relaxed, but bad posture really makes all the small muscles in the body work harder.
- If not using a headset for phone calls, avoid cradling a phone to the ear.
- Take micro-breaks to stretch at the work station; stand-up, walk-around, blink and just move eyes off the monitor and focus on something else in the room.

Transitioning to a work from home routine can also be challenging for some employees. Try to establish regular touch points with employees and make them aware of resources available to assist in making the adjustment a positive experience. Whether working from home temporarily or every day, it can be important for employees to take the time to make sure their workstation and work environment are properly set up, efficient, and productive.