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Temporary Work at Home Ergonomics Guideline

The purpose of this guideline is to help support the mental health of workers by reducing the potential for negative effects of poor ergonomics in temporary work at home situations.

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During a critical event, some or all workers in an organization might be required to work at home for a period of time. This is not a business as normal situation. The duration of work at home may vary and may be unknown, depending on the nature of the event and the nature of the work. It can be difficult for workers to adapt, particularly if the situation has affected multiple workplaces, schools and community supports.

While a worker may seek comfort while working at home temporarily, it is important to understand that comfort does not always minimize risk, particularly if the worker is in deep focus or if their “comfortable” position is the result of poor posture. It is also important to recognize that a worker may feel the need to push through a task despite discomfort or pain.

Practicing good ergonomics in temporary work at home situations can be quite challenging. However, it is important, because ergonomics can affect a worker’s physical and mental health, and their ability to function in work and personal situations.

Management and workers need to work together to ensure good ergonomic practice in a temporary work at home situation. In many cases, workers may not have an “ideal” set up to facilitate work from home as they might in a permanent work from home situation. Even if the worker does have a home office, in cases such as a critical event that affects multiple organizations, there may be others in the home sharing that space.

A worker may have a home office with a good ergonomic set up or they may be working at their kitchen table, or on their couch, in another room of the home, or even on their floor. Requiring a worker to have a typical office ergonomic set up could increase stress for a worker who does not have access to the space, equipment or privacy to have such a set up. However, supporting the ergonomic needs of the worker with consideration of the other challenges they may be dealing with can help to ease the strain on the body and mind in situations where workers may be working in less than ideal set ups.

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