

Workplace Health Issues

Ventilation

Every enclosed workplace should be adequately ventilated. Fresh, clean air should be drawn from a source, where possible, from outside of the workplace. However, this should not be sited where contaminated air may be drawn into the workplace i.e. close to a flue or in an area where vehicles manoeuvre etc.

Enclosed workplaces should be sufficiently well ventilated so that stale air, and air which is hot or humid is replaced with fresh air, without causing a draught.

In many cases, windows may provide sufficient ventilation, but where necessary mechanical ventilation systems should be provided, and properly maintained.

Temperature

The temperature of workrooms should provide comfort without the need for special clothes.

The temperature of workrooms should normally be at least 16 degrees Celsius, unless the work involves physical effort, in which case it should be at least 13 degrees Celsius.

COLD WEATHER

You can help ensure comfort in cold weather by:

- providing adequate heating or local heating if necessary;
- reducing exposure to the cold by separating cold areas from areas /products from where people are working;
- reducing draughts;
- providing protective clothing;
- limit exposure to a cold environment i.e. work rotation, later start times;
- allowing sufficient breaks to enable employees to get hot drinks or to warm up in heated areas.

WARM WEATHER

You can help ensure comfort in hot weather by:

- providing air-conditioning;
- providing fans, e.g. desk, pedestal or ceiling-mounted;
- ensuring that windows can be opened;
- shading windows to reduce the heating effect of the sun;
- siting workstations away from direct sunlight and places which radiate heat;
- providing additional facilities, e.g. cold water;
- limit exposure, such as flexible working patterns, e.g. early start/finish times;

- allowing sufficient breaks to enable employees to get cold drinks or to cool down;
- relaxing formal dress codes, but you must ensure that personal protective equipment is provided and used if required.

Thermometers should be provided so that employees can check temperature through out the workplace.

Lighting

Sufficient lighting should be provided in workplaces so that people are able to work, use facilities, and move from place to place safely and without experiencing eyestrain.

Stairs should be well lit and if necessary, local lighting should be provided at workstations, and at places of particular risk such as traffic routes.

Dazzling lights must be avoided. Light fittings should not create any hazard.

Emergency lighting should be provided in workrooms where a sudden loss of light would create a risk. Emergency lighting should be powered by an independent source.

Cleanliness and Waste Materials

Every workplace and the furniture, furnishings and fittings should be kept sufficiently clean. The surfaces of floors, walls and ceilings should be capable of being kept clean.

Waste materials should be removed as necessary. Waste should not be allowed to accumulate except in suitable containers.

Room Dimensions and Space

Workrooms should have sufficient floor area, height and unoccupied space in order to allow persons to move about with ease.

The volume of the room, when empty, divided by the number of persons normally working in it, should be at least 11 cubic metres (all or part of a room over 3 metres high should be counted at 3 metres high).

The figure of 11 cubic metres is a minimum and may be insufficient, taking into account the layout of the room, nature of the work and the furniture in the room.

Workstations and Seating

Workstations should be arranged so that each task can be carried out safely and comfortably.

Work materials or controls should be within easy reach without undue bending or stretching.

If work can or must be done sitting, a suitable seat must be provided which provides adequate support to the lower back. A footrest should also be provided to employees who cannot place their feet flat on the floor.

A Workplace Facilities checklist form is contained in the document library. This can be used by the employer/responsible person to assess compliance with their obligations in relation to workplace requirements.