

Laptop Guidelines

Today, many people at work routinely use a laptop or portable computer for a part of their working day whether 'on the road' or in their office or at home.

Just as desktop computers have specific guidelines and recommendations for safe and healthy use, so do laptops. Considering the extent of laptop usage in the workplace, apart from the legislation, common sense dictates that everyone should follow guidelines to ensure that injuries and ill-health conditions do not affect people using laptop and other portable devices.

The following information provides some suitable suggestions in two important areas.

Firstly, the design of laptops is for mobility, which means screens are usually fixed to the machine, keyboards and screens are smaller. This can create difficulties in maintaining a comfortable and healthy working posture.

Secondly, the environments in which laptops are used, such as working at home, in a car, coffee shop etc. are unlike modern offices. It can be difficult to sit well so that you have correct posture and a comfortable working position.

Working with a Laptop

Laptop computers are designed for temporary or mobile working and not for prolonged or lengthy periods of use. Pace yourself. Take frequent breaks. Stand up and stretch. If you feel any strains or pains, stop what you are doing and experiment with different positions.

- Adopt a good sitting position in order to avoid bending or straining your wrists
- Try not to slouch. Do not sit forward and crouch over the laptop as this can cause strain and fatigue to the neck and shoulder area
- Do not use a laptop whilst sitting on a sofa or easy chair
- Do not work with a laptop on your lap – raise the level up
- Do not use a laptop when lying on a bed. This causes strain to the neck and back.

Working with a Laptop in Cars

Laptops should not be used in cars. However, on occasions this may be unavoidable in which case:

- Never use your laptop when driving
- Do not use a laptop whilst sitting in the driver's seat with it perched on the steering wheel, your lap or twisted sideways on the passenger seat
- Sit in the passenger seat if you have to use the laptop. Adjust the seat to provide plenty of legroom and if you have a carrycase or bag, put it under the laptop to raise it slightly. This will improve comfort for your neck and wrists.
- Limit the time you use the laptop to a maximum of 30 minutes.

Personal Safety

Always be conscious of your personal safety when carrying or using a laptop (or other mobile device) Take sensible precautions such as:

- Take extra care in public places, or in other situations (or at times) where the risk of theft may be greater
- Do not carry the laptop in luggage with a computer manufacturers branding
- Always be conscious of vehicle security when transporting your laptop between locations e.g. never leave it on view in an unattended vehicle; never leave it overnight in an unattended vehicle.

Manual Handling

- Always try to reduce the amount of weight in your laptop case. Do not carry equipment or papers unless they are really necessary
- Consider using a backpack/rucksack to cut down strain on arms and distribute loads evenly across the body. This is also less conspicuous for personal safety reasons. Alternatively, use a luggage trolley where appropriate.

Please remember to use the mains power point to extend the life of your laptop battery and position the trailing cable sensibly in order to avoid a tripping hazard.

All staff should read & initial and then file under Section Number 5 of Purple Safety Folder

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