

Department of Information Technology

DRAFT HEALTH & SAFETY POLICY FOR THE WORKPLACE

Every workplace accident, illness or dispute is a cost to our organization, as well as a cost to injured individuals and their families. As such, as management and employees of the Department of Information Technology (DoIT), we all have a responsibility to create a safe workplace. Working together to ensure proper health and safety, will help to improve the work environment and the productivity of the department, as employees are to take responsibility for their own health and safety rather than relying solely on the “safety officer” or management.

The Department of Information Technology (DoIT) is committed to ensuring that all employees have a safe work environment to reduce any injury while on the job.

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Present safe working conditions for all employees, in order to avoid workplace injuries
- Avoid losses as a result of damage to property and equipment
- Encourage good work practices
- Present consistency in safety practices and standards for all employees

It is the responsibility of the Department of Information Technology to provide employees with a healthy and safe place of employment, generally free from recognized hazards that cause or are likely to cause death or serious injury. Each DoIT location will entail sufficient safety devices to protect employee safety and health. All employees of DoIT are obligated to ensure that notification is given to the Senior Administrative Officer, or the Directors, of any unsafe or hazardous IT related conditions in the workplace.

I. GENERAL PRECAUTIONS

The following general precautions are required of the employee(s):

Overall Operation

1. Value your life before personal possessions.
2. Cooperate with your fellow employees. Show them the safe way to perform work.
3. Do your work safely. Do not take chances which could result in personal injury.
4. Familiarize yourself with the duties and hazards of your job. If you have any questions, discuss them with your Supervisor.
5. Ignorance is no excuse for an accident.
6. If you have questions about how to do your job, you should ask your Supervisor.
7. Do not distract the attention of fellow employees while working, or operating any equipment.
8. Use the correct tools, or equipment, when performing any job.
9. All tools and equipment shall be visually inspected before use.
10. Chairs, boxes and other similar unstable devices shall not be used as working platforms.
11. Do not attempt to lift or carry anything too heavy or bulky to be handled safely by one person.
12. Lift Trucks and other devices for handling heavy loads should be used wherever possible to reduce to a minimum the manual handling of materials.
13. Unauthorized personnel are not allowed in the secured or work areas.

II. EMPLOYER'S RESPONSIBILITIES

General

1. DoIT will provide adequate supervision and take all measures necessary to ensure that the work is performed in accordance with the established health and safety guidelines. This will entail:
 - a. Health & Safety of the employees and safety and fire protection in the work areas.
 - b. DoIT will provide training to employees so that employees obtain the proper knowledge and skills to properly perform their assigned duties and to insure compliance with all safety rules.
 - c. Safety on equipment installed by DoIT.
 - d. Installation of local exhaust-type ventilating systems, in server room, to remove smoke and fumes in the work area to ensure that conditions are maintained within the safety limits.
 - e. Supply and provide proper training on usage of all necessary safety and fire protection equipment (eg. fire extinguishers).
 - f. DoIT will maintain a log and summary of all occupational illness, fatalities and any workplace injury that results in the loss of a work day, work restrictions, transfer to other work, loss of consciousness or incident which requires medical treatment. The entry will be made within six days of the injury on the appropriate form.
 - g. An Injury Report form will be completed immediately by DoIT and submitted to HR or other appropriate authority.
 - h. Supervisors will follow up on all communicated employee concerns relating to the ergonomics of their work environment.

General Orientation

It is the responsibility of DoIT to provide a general overview and orientation to individuals arriving at any DoIT location for training or meetings of Emergency response procedures: In addition communicate health and safety rule for all miscellaneous locations.

III. EMPLOYEES' RESPONSIBILITIES

General

It is the responsibility of every employee to participate in and accept personal responsibility for health and safety specific to his/her work place.

Employees are expected to take the initiative to create and maintain a safe work environment. This includes: not performing jobs without proper training especially relating to operating equipment; and ensuring your workstation is suited to you and your job (ergonomics).

All employees should know where the First Aid kit and Health Services areas are located. It is also expected that employees need to be familiar with the chemicals used in their daily work, their first aid treatment and handling in the event of a chemical incident.

IT IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF EVERY EMPLOYEE TO REPORT:

- Unsafe conditions to his or her Supervisor, or the responsible administrator in the area.
- Possible hazards and question potential problems.
- Any physical discomfort they are experiencing which they suspect may be related to their work environment.

It is also the Right and Responsibility of every employee to refuse work that he/she believes to be unsafe, and the responsibility to make or assist in making the work safe.

Employees are also expected to participate in department health and safety meetings.

IV. CLEAN WORK AREA

A clean orderly workplace is a safer workplace. Not keeping the workplace clean and orderly is hazardous. It encourages poor handling and storage practices which result in damages. A clean work station makes your job easier and more pleasant. At the end of each work day, each employee should tidy up their assigned work area.

The rule is that a job is not done until the tidying up has been done. Common areas should be cleaned up by all personnel, when necessary.

- All areas must be kept neat and orderly at all times. Each employee is responsible for the cleanliness of the area in which they work and for all tools and equipment used. Keep your work place free of clutter.
- Spills and breakage are to be cleaned up immediately.
- Spaces around machines and equipment should be kept clear and clean at all times to permit free movement.
- Floors should be kept clean and clear to prevent slipping and collision.
- Lighting fixtures are to be checked regularly to permit clear vision. Faulty lights should be reported to Administration, so that building maintenance/Facilities can be contacted to rectify the situation.

V. FIRE PROCEDURES

FIRE PREVENTION

- All employees must know where the fire extinguishers are located, and how to properly use them.
- Fire extinguishers and First Aid Stations should be clearly marked with signs.
- Never block access to Exits, fire extinguishers, electric switches and panels.
- Do not block or stack material against doors, which would prevent them from operating properly in event of a fire.
- Do not use flammable material near electrical panels, switches, lift trucks or any electrical equipment.
- Make sure all equipment is properly grounded where needed.
- Fire extinguishers must be inspected regularly.
- Report to your Supervisor any defect in electrical, fire prevention or material handling equipment.
- NO flammable materials are to be placed around an exit door way.

VI. ACCIDENTS AND INJURIES

All injuries must be reported to your Supervisor as soon as possible.

- Report unsafe conditions or practices immediately.
- An employee injured on the job may be given First Aid. If the injury is serious, notify your Supervisor immediately.
- If burned by chemicals or acids, wash with water immediately (if appropriate) to prevent quick deep burns. Flush the burn generously. Notify your Supervisor immediately.

VII. OFFICE

The following measures should be used to detour serious injuries or hazards from existing in the Department of IT.

- Extension cords and surge protectors should be kept as short as conditions permit and should not be run across walk ways.
- Do not attempt to move heavy office machines from one desk to another, without the assistance from others.
- Standing on chairs or desks is a hazardous practice. A safe stepladder of adequate height should be used when climbing has to be done. The stepladder should be fully opened, so it is properly supported.
- File cabinets and desk drawers should be kept closed when not in use. Do not open more than one file drawer at a time.
- Do not leave chairs, waste containers or any object in walk ways.
- Do not overload circuits or UPS's with office machines or appliances.

VIII. OFFICE ERGONOMICS

In an office setting, injuries may be sustained over a period of many years. The repetition of a seemingly innocuous task over a period of time can cause an injury. The resulting injuries can be physically painful and rehabilitation can be difficult and time consuming.

How to identify poor ergonomics:

Review the following office ergonomics overview, emphasizing the identification of early warning signs.

Office Ergonomics Overview

EARLY WARNING SIGNS	POTENTIAL CAUSE	TRY THIS
Sore lower back	no lumbar support	use back rest of chair put small pillow or lumbar support on backrest of chair
Burning in the upper back	no upper back support from chair	put document holder or prop up so you can see without leaning forward
Stiff neck	working with head turned to side tilting head forward holding telephone between the ear and shoulder	move or raise monitor to center of desk check if headset is available

Sore shoulders	reaching forward for long periods or reaching forward frequently	move closer to the keyboard Bring mouse down to level of keyboard or 1" higher
Arching wrists	working with wrists extended (dropped) too much repetition	add a wrist rest to the front of your keyboard and at the front of your mouse pad rest thumbs on front edge of keyboard so wrists can't drop add variety to your work by changing your activities occasionally
Dry eyes	forget to blink	rest eyes periodically and do simple eye exercises
Eyestrain and sore eyes	glares from overhead lights or windows eye glasses not correct need vision check	re-orient your desk and computer so light is not directly behind or in front of you close the blinds when working at the computer have offending lights disconnected or have light grids installed to change light distribution get eyes checked, make sure to inform your optometrist that you work at a computer

IX. COMPUTER WORKSTATION – HEALTH & SAFETY TIPS

Employees should be aware of the following computer related injuries that may be sustained over a period of time, if poor conditions exist. With the increase in computer use, several health and safety issues related to vision, musculoskeletal issues, body aches and pains have arisen. Luckily, many of these issues are preventable and if incurred are temporary. They can be resolved by adopting simple corrective action.

Tables and Desks

Tables should allow sufficient leg room. They should also have enough room to support computer equipment.

Chair and Posture

Musculoskeletal problems are encountered when computer users maintain an unfavorable posture while using the computer and have inadequate back support. Ensure that your chair is adjustable and comfortable. Your feet should be parallel to and flat on the floor. Avoid sitting in a bolt-straight position. Position your keyboard so you do not have to stretch to reach it. It is vital that users exercise good posture to avoid backache and other computer related conditions.

Computer Vision Syndrome

Cause:

This is a condition that is caused by poor lighting and glare on the computer screen. Both of these factors place strain on the users eyes, causes blurry vision, burning and/or watering eyes, headaches and in some instances shoulder and neck pain.

Prevention:

The Department of IT purchases monitors that have built in anti-glare screens. Give your eyes periodic breaks from the screen and perform frequent blinking. In addition, adjust the brightness and contrast to suit your preferences and reduce eye strain. Another effort to avoid eyestrain, the user should also periodically focus on objects at varying distance. Also, the monitor should not be positioned so that the top line of the monitor is not higher than your eyes. The monitor should also be at the same level and beside the document holder if you use one. Monitors should be between 18 to 24 inches away from your face. Lastly, position monitors to avoid glare from sunlight and keep them clean.

Wrist Health

Cause:

Poor wrist posture and the repetitive motion of the hands may result in Carpal Tunnel Syndrome and Wrist Tendonitis or other arm discomfort.

Prevention:

Ensure that you use appropriate posture when typing. For example, your fingers should be above the 'home position' (asdf and jkl; keys) on the keyboard, when your elbows are by your sides. Users should avoid gripping the mouse too tightly. The keyboard and mouse should be kept at the same level. In addition, use of ergonomic keyboard and mouse help to reduce the risk of wrist related conditions.

Heavy Objects

As an IT Professional, heavy lifting is encountered on a regular basis. This is why it is essential that items be lifted properly, from the legs and not the back. If the equipment appears to be too heavy, officers should exercise caution and ask for assistance or use other means.

Take Breaks

People who do continuous, intensive computer work, such as programming, for long periods have a higher risk of developing a series of health issues. Computer users should not work more than 3 consecutive hours without a break. The break does not have to be long and could just entail a stroll around the office. This would allow time for your eyes to refocus and realign your body. Also, users can alternate work tasks, not including the computer.

Left Handed Mouse Users

The mouse can be placed on the left hand side of the computer and configured to accommodate your preferences.

X. LAPTOPS

Laptop computers can present particular problems due to small screens, keyboards and inbuilt pointing devices (e.g. a small portable mouse or touchpad). Prolonged use of laptops should be avoided. If using a laptop as a main computer, it is advisable to use the laptop with a docking station. This will allow an ordinary mouse, keyboard and monitor to be used with the laptop.

Laptop Guidelines

The purpose of these guidelines is to establish safe work practices for employees whilst using laptop and notebook computers in the workplace as part of a workstation set up, or in the field as a portable access tool.

General Information

These computers are becoming more common as their convenience is acknowledged. The very aspects of these computers which make them useful in a work efficiency capacity create hazards when they are used for prolonged periods. This is due mainly to their lack of adjustability.

Problems

There are special problems associated with the use of portable computers. The screens are hinged to the keyboard and this limits the adjustability as well as the distance that the screen can be placed away from the user. When the screen is at a comfortable height and distance, the keyboard is not and vice versa.

Hence comfortable work posture is impossible to achieve and leads to injury with prolonged use. Some physical symptoms of prolonged use may be cramping, muscular fatigue leading to shoulder and neck strain and possibly Occupational Overuse Syndrome.

Recommendations

Screen too close

The best way to avoid discomfort here is to place the Monitor at a distance of approximately 450mm-750mm and enlarge the font if necessary.

Central mouse

The fact that the mouse on a portable computer is almost always located in the middle of the keypad may not allow the user to relax the shoulder and keep the arm in a neutral position. Therefore, an external mouse is to be used when operating a portable computer.

Wrist rest

As in the case of a desktop keyboard, you may use a wrist rest to intermittently support your hands in between bursts of typing on the keyboard.

Avoid using your portable computer on a high surface.

This will cause you to raise your shoulders and lead to shoulder and back pain. Where possible have the computer placed so that the elbows can rest comfortably by the side without the shoulders being raised. Have the keyboard and mouse placed to enable comfortable reach.

Portable computer use

Portable computer use ideally should:-

- Have a detached keyboard or the capacity for another keyboard to be attached
- Have positive image screens
- Be light and comfortable to be carried safely

Workstation use

Portable computers do not provide the level of ergonomic safety in terms of working posture, screen clarity or machine adjustability as office based equipment.

Therefore:-

- Portable computers should not to be used for continuous keyboard use either in the office or at any other location.
- It is essential that tasks incorporating the use of portable computers are designed to include regular pauses away from the equipment.
- Where possible plug the portable computer into a standard desk monitor with separate keyboard either by the using a docking station or a sleeve inclusive of separate keyboard and mouse.

CONCLUSION

A computer is an essential tool in executing the work of the organization. Although problems may occur through their use, by using the proper techniques and working practices identified, the risk of problems can be greatly reduced.

EMERGENCIES For FIRE, POLICE or AMBULANCE at all times DIAL 999

In the event of other occurrences (burst pipes, electrical fault etc) during normal working hours dial 4236 to report incident to the Senior Administrative Office.

A First Aid kit for minor accidents is located at both DoIT Locations.

All injuries and accidents encountered during working hours, or on the job, must be reported to the Senior Administrative Officer and an Accident report form should be completed in all cases.

Fire Routine

On Discovering a Fire

Sound the alarm by pulling the lever of the nearest Fire Alarm contact point. These are located on all floors throughout the building.

Fire Fighting

DO NOT TAKE PERSONAL RISKS

Tackle the fire with appliances available, keeping between the fire and your exit. If you are unable to extinguish a fire, if possible close all doors and windows to reduce the air supply. Leave the building by the nearest available exit.

On Hearing the Fire Alarm

- Leave the building by the nearest available exit.
- Assemble to the safe location indicated by the emergency officer
- Keep well clear of building exit routes, and of the road, as the Fire Department will require access.

Individuals with clothing on fire

- Smother flames: if possible use a **fire blanket**.
- Do not put grease on burns. Apply cold water and immediately seek First Aid.

Smoking

SMOKING IS NOT PERMITTED IN ANY PART OF THE DEPARTMENT OR IN ANY DEPARTMENT VEHICLE

Access to the Buildings (RFG & CAC)

- The doors accessing RFG are accessible to authorized persons via card key Monday through Friday 08:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.
- Please ensure that the door is closed firmly behind you when you enter or leave.
- Do not admit others who are unknown to you, or reveal door codes or give cards to anyone not authorized to enter the department.
- Always report any suspicious activity to Director or Deputy Director of DoIT or the security officers at CAC ext. 2326.

Afterhours working

- All staff members should obtain approval to work hours beyond 6pm.
- Turn off all lights in rooms when you leave.
- Visitors are not allowed free access to the building after 6pm, without the approval of management.

Document Review

This document is subject to review every two years.

CONCLUSION

Health and safety is important in the workplace because management does not want any employees to be injured or become ill as a result of working, therefore, employees are encouraged to follow these guidelines. No only this policy protects you as employees from harm while on the job, but it also increases productivity by retaining healthy and happy workers.

Appendix I Incident & Hazard Report

Incident and Hazard Report

This form can be used to report and document unsafe conditions and workplace health and safety concerns. Workplace health and safety concerns include those related to chemical, physical and biological hazards. Your observations can help to identify hazards and resolve problems as quickly as possible. All health and safety concerns should first be reported and discussed with your immediate Supervisor and/or the Senior Administrative Officer. A copy of this form can be obtained from the Administrative Section or the Department of Human Resources Website

<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 100px; height: 20px; margin: 0 auto;"></div> <p style="text-align: center; margin: 0;">Date of this report</p>	<p style="margin: 0;">The Government of the British Virgin Islands</p> <p style="margin: 0;">ACCIDENT/INCIDENT REPORT FORM</p>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 100px; height: 20px; margin: 0 auto;"></div> <p style="text-align: center; margin: 0;">Incident Number</p>																																			
<p><i>Accident = An unplanned event which causes injury and/or damage to property and/or equipment or fatality.</i></p> <p><i>Incident = An unplanned event which causes or could have caused injury and/or damage to property and/or equipment.</i></p>																																					
<p>When to Use this Form</p>																																					
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Please complete this form and send it to the Health and Safety Unit, Dept. of Human Resources, if you have an accident. 2. All fires, electrical shocks, spillages of or exposure to hazardous substances, failure of load bearing equipment or load bearing structures must be reported to the Health and Safety Unit immediately (ext. 3089) even if there is no injury. 3. This form should be completed by the person involved and sent to the H&S Unit within 48 hours of any incident. 4. The supervisor should complete the form if the person involved is not available to do so. 																																					
<p>Person Involved in Accident - OR - Person Reporting an Incident</p>																																					
Title	Surname	Given Name	Department/Unit/Section	Ext No.																																	
<p>(please tick) Staff [] Student [] Contractor [] Visitor []</p>																																					
Date of Birth ____/____/____	Date of Employment ____/____/____	Occupation	Supervisor																																		
<p>Details of the Incident</p>																																					
Time of incident AM/PM	Date of incident ____/____/____	Place of incident (Be very specific)																																			
Describe the incident (Include the name of chemicals, process or equipment involved)																																					
What was being done at the time? (e.g. driving a forklift, lifting bags of cement, typing)																																					
What went wrong? (e.g. brakes failed, slipped on wet floor, arm started hurting while typing)																																					
<p>Contributing Factor Codes</p> <p>Choose the factor which is the best explanation of why the accident occurred and write it in the box → </p> <table style="width: 100%; font-size: small;"> <tr> <td>A Poor work organization</td> <td>AA Deadlines and haste</td> <td>C2 Poor visibility: lighting</td> </tr> <tr> <td>A1 Poor physical fitness</td> <td>AB Overload and fatigue</td> <td>C3 Inadequate footing</td> </tr> <tr> <td>A2 Personal protection not worn</td> <td>AC Inadequate supervision</td> <td>C4 Inadequate ventilation</td> </tr> <tr> <td>A3 Inadequate understanding</td> <td>B Machine</td> <td>C5 Inadequate noise control</td> </tr> <tr> <td>A4 Incorrect/inadequate work method</td> <td>B1 Poor machine design</td> <td>C6 Poor temperature control</td> </tr> <tr> <td>A5 Incorrect/inadequate tool</td> <td>B2 Lack of maintenance</td> <td>C7 Inadequate clearances</td> </tr> <tr> <td>A6 Bad personal protection (inadequate protection)</td> <td>B3 Lack of guards/interlocks</td> <td>C8 Poor access</td> </tr> <tr> <td>A7 Inadequate instruction</td> <td>B4 Poor ergonomics/furniture</td> <td>C9 Design problem non machine (non-furniture)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>A8 Poor supervisor/staff relations</td> <td>B5 Other (machine problems)</td> <td>D Not applicable</td> </tr> <tr> <td>A9 Inadequate housekeeping</td> <td>C Environment</td> <td>E Other/chance factor</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>C1 Poor visibility: obstructed view</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>					A Poor work organization	AA Deadlines and haste	C2 Poor visibility: lighting	A1 Poor physical fitness	AB Overload and fatigue	C3 Inadequate footing	A2 Personal protection not worn	AC Inadequate supervision	C4 Inadequate ventilation	A3 Inadequate understanding	B Machine	C5 Inadequate noise control	A4 Incorrect/inadequate work method	B1 Poor machine design	C6 Poor temperature control	A5 Incorrect/inadequate tool	B2 Lack of maintenance	C7 Inadequate clearances	A6 Bad personal protection (inadequate protection)	B3 Lack of guards/interlocks	C8 Poor access	A7 Inadequate instruction	B4 Poor ergonomics/furniture	C9 Design problem non machine (non-furniture)	A8 Poor supervisor/staff relations	B5 Other (machine problems)	D Not applicable	A9 Inadequate housekeeping	C Environment	E Other/chance factor		C1 Poor visibility: obstructed view	
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Action taken to correct problem (eg. further job training, maintenance or housekeeping) – Continue overleaf if required																																					
Others present: (Name/s)		Their Dept./Section/Tel. No:																																			
<p>Details of Injury or Illness</p>																																					
Part of body affected, eg. arm:		Name of illness or description of injury																																			
Left [] Right []																																					
Medical Attention given by: (please tick) First Aid [] Government Health Service Nurse []																																					
Hospital [] Private Doctor (includes Doctors located at Gov. Health Service) []																																					
Time off (Actual or expected)		Signed by (person or supervisor)																																			
		<p style="font-size: small;">days</p>																																			
<p>Please send to: Health & Safety Unit, Dept. of Human Resources</p>																																					