

# Office Accommodation

## Overview

Office environments like other workplaces contain a range of hazards which need to be eliminated or controlled effectively.

Part 4.3 of the [NSW OH&S Regulation 2001](#) imposes a duty on the employer to ensure that factors such as lighting, space, heat, cold, glare, reflection, air quality, ventilation and noise etc are controlled to ensure that the “ambient” working environment is conducive to maintaining health and safety.

The abovementioned regulation applies equally to office accommodation as to any other working environment.

UWS “[Health and Safety in the Office Guidelines](#)” provide employees with useful information regarding the hazards and risks found in office environments and outlines some effective hazard and risk control measures.

## Maintaining the Office Environment

[Capital Works and Facilities](#) is responsible for ensuring that factors such as lighting, space, heat, cold, glare, reflection, air quality and ventilation are adequately maintained.

Colleges, Schools and Divisions are responsible for ensuring all employees have serviceable equipment such as chairs, computers, monitors, document holders etc. [IT Client Services](#) are responsible for the installation and maintenance of computers and for dealing with breakdowns, interruptions and other technical or software problems.

Equipment such as chairs, computers, monitors, document holders can be purchased through Corporate Express.

Employees are responsible for ensuring that their workstation is adjusted correctly and properly maintained. Damaged or unserviceable equipment **MUST** be reported to the appropriate manager, supervisor and/or administrative assistant so that repair or replacement can be arranged.

## Critical Point Summary

- The office environment contains a range of hazards that have to be effectively managed
- Employers are legally obliged to ensure that the combination of lighting, temperature, humidity and air quality in office environments is maintained to a level that is conducive to health, safety and productivity

- Employees must also take appropriate steps to reduce the risk of injury to themselves and other people by using equipment correctly and maintain good housekeeping standards
- The recommended temperature range for offices is between 21-24 degrees Celcius – AS 1837 – 1976 Code of Practice for Application of Ergonomics to Factory and Office Work
- Photocopiers should not be placed in close proximity to personal workstations
- Photocopiers fitted with an ozone filter do not present a significant hazard to health, provided they are properly maintained
- 400 lux is regarded as sufficient lighting for routine office work but levels may need to be varied depending upon the nature of the task
- The general rule of thumb for office space is to allocate 6.25 square meters per individual workstation, including furniture and fittings, but excluding passageways and amenities. This may vary depending upon availability of space, equipment used and systems of work
- Office furniture must meet Australian Standards, be suitable for the task and maintained in a serviceable condition
- Glare and reflection can be controlled effectively using a combination of colour scheme, blinds, tilting/adjusting the monitor, optimum orientation of workstations, anti glare screens, task lighting etc
- Most radiation and electromagnetic fields emitted from monitors are much less than those from natural sources such as the sun and are therefore not regarded as a significant risk to health and safety by the ILO or WHO organisations
- Muscle fatigue and soreness should be managed by a combination of rest breaks, task variation, moderate exercise, maintaining correct posture, adjusting workstation correctly, realistic workloads and completion deadlines
- Checklists are available to assist in the setting up and maintenance of [office working environments](#)