

OFFICE SAFETY POLICY: Part 2 – Guidance and procedures

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This part of the Office Safety Policy gives guidance and procedures on the health and safety aspects of working in an office

1.2 This part of the policy has the following sections:

- Section 1 - Introduction
- Section 2 - What is office work?
- Section 3 - Six monthly inspections
- Section 4 - Office equipment
- Section 5 - Safety equipment
- Section 6 - Office environment
- Section 7 - General aspects
- Section 8 - Implementation and review

1.3 This policy complies with Scottish Housing Regulator Standards of Governance and Financial Management 5.3 and 5.4

2.0 WHAT IS OFFICE WORK?

2.1 Office work is any work task which is conducted within an office, including:

- File handling
- Manual handling
- Use of Display Screen Equipment (DSE) (computers)
- Report writing
- Rota planning
- General administration
- Office environment management
- Lone working

3.0 SIX MONTHLY INSPECTIONS

3.1 Six monthly inspections of offices should be conducted using the ARK premises inspection template which is HS03 Risk Assessment Policy – Part 5.

4.0 OFFICE EQUIPMENT

Office equipment should be recorded and serviced/maintained as required by HS13 Work and Lifting Equipment Policy

4.1 Display Screen Equipment (DSE - computers)

Information on ergonomics, i.e. layout, and workstation equipment is available in HS09 Display Screen Equipment Policy.

4.2 Shredders

Shredders can cause trapping injuries from loose clothing e.g. ties, hair and fingers. The safe use of the shredder should be part of the on-job training of office workers. Shredders should have signs warning users of the hazards. This includes trapping, emptying and use of the shredder.

Shredding of large amounts of documents can be completed off site by contractors specialising in disposal of documents safely. Contact ARK's Maintenance Team to discuss this option.

4.3 Photocopiers

Photocopiers produce heat when constantly in use or when large runs are being copied. This heat can result in the office being above a comfortable temperature for office work. Where large runs are common, consideration should be given to siting the photocopier in a separate room or, where this is not possible, having appropriate ventilation near the photocopier.

Although the noise from a photocopier is not considered damaging to hearing (except for very large industrial copiers) the noise produced can cause nuisance noise to those working within an office. Consideration should be given to siting the photocopier in a separate room or having room dividers or barriers surrounding the copier.

A properly maintained and serviced photocopier does not produce harmful gas i.e. ozone, in sufficient quantities to cause harm. The photocopier will usually have stopped operating before any harmful levels are reached.

Note: Ozone is produced in small quantities as copies are being taken. However, it quickly changes form back to oxygen.

Removing paper jams from photocopiers can result in close proximity to hot parts of the copier. The manufacturer's instructions should be followed at all times. Only those who are familiar with this process should attempt to remove a paper jam. Assistance should be sought by those not familiar with the copier's working.

5.0 SAFETY EQUIPMENT

5.1 The items required for an office are:

- Fire safety equipment, e.g. extinguishers, notices, posters etc – see the Fire Safety policy;
- First Aid box – access, availability ,stock check – see the First Aid Policy;
- Other health and safety notices

6.0 OFFICE ENVIRONMENT

6.1 Space

Regulatory guidance is that there is a minimum recommended space requirement per employee of 11m³. This should be followed where possible, taking into account the length of time spent in the office. This does not include space for equipment e.g. desk etc. Where this guidance cannot be achieved there should be sufficient space for employees to have freedom of movement around their desk and clear passageways for emergency exit.

6.2 Storage

Storage within an office is often limited and the common practice of storing a wide variety of objects and quantities of paper, files etc within the office is to be discouraged. Not only is this good safety practice but also good insurance risk management practice as losing files in a fire results in losing valuable business information.

ARK has a contractor that can store confidential documentation off site at a secure location that can be retrieved at any time. ARK Managers should consider using this resource if there is a build up of documents in an office that is taking up space and causing a fire risk .

[Data Archiving Guidelines](#)

Suitable and adequate storage should be provided, preferably in metal or wooden cabinets which can be locked, especially if they contain personal or sensitive business information e.g. accident records, finance details etc.

The quantities of combustible materials ordered at any one time should be limited to the storage available.

After a delivery the materials should be checked and moved into storage as soon as possible to avoid any fire routes being blocked or causing a tripping hazards. It is recommended that delivered materials are stored within that working day.

6.3 Ventilation and temperature

A thermometer should be provided in each office, situated where it will show an average temperature for that area, i.e. it should not be placed near radiators or windows.

The minimum temperature for an office is 16°C, which should be reached within the first hour of occupation. A comfortable level to be maintained throughout the day is considered to be around 20°C. There is no maximum temperature within any regulations or Approved Codes of Practice and so it is recommended that the temperature does not exceed the comfortable level. It is generally considered that when the temperature goes above 25°C for long periods of time then it is considered uncomfortable.

There are various actions to take to avoid temperatures becoming too high. These include:

- closing window blinds before the sun has heated the room – which usually means quite early in the day e.g. by mid-morning
- having suitable and sufficient window openings ventilation or electric fans
- having good control of heating systems i.e. being able to switch these off or on.

6.4 Security

Security of an office is not only important for theft reasons or accessing confidential files but also for the personal safety of employees. The Lone Worker section within the Health and Safety Manual contains greater details.

However, a few general recommendations are:

- Offices should always be secure, particularly when unattended;
- There should be a system for opening/locking a building;
- Visitors should be logged in and out;

- The lone worker policy and guidelines should be followed.

6.5 **Switching machinery on or off**

When opening or closing an office which involves switching machinery on or off, a safe system of work should be developed associated with the risk assessment for this task.

The manufacturer's instructions should contain sufficient information for this to be developed.

7.0 **GENERAL**

7.1 **Moving & Handling (i.e. Manual Handling)**

Several work tasks carried out in an office involve moving & handling e.g. carrying paper deliveries, mail sorting etc. Reference should be made to HS08 Moving & Handling Policy of the Health and Safety manual for detailed instructions and advice.

7.2 **Display Screen Equipment (DSE - computers)**

A major work task within an office is the use of Display Screen Equipment. As the use of DSE requires a detailed risk assessment of the workstation this has its own section within the Health and Safety Manual and reference should be made to this section. HS09 Display Screen Equipment Policy

7.3 **Lone Working**

It is recognised that an office worker may be a lone worker within that office. This also includes those working outwith 'normal office hours'. Reference should be made to HS12 Lone Worker of the Health and Safety Manual.

7.4 **Training/Induction**

For working in an office a general in house induction is required which will cover the elements of office working. This induction is likely to be of the duration of 2-3 hours and will cover the subjects mentioned within ARK's Office Safety policy and its guidelines.

This will include: fire, Moving & Handling, security, lone working, office layout, lighting, ergonomics (computer equipment layout), tripping hazards, electricity, aggressive behaviour and general environment. The content and format of the course will be subject to change according to the location.

8.0 **IMPLEMENTATION AND REVIEW**

8.1 The Chief Executive is responsible for ensuring that this policy, and the procedures that support it, are followed by all employees and Board Members.

8.2 The Chief Executive will ensure that this procedure is reviewed at least every three years and amended as required.

Approved by the Senior Leadership Team:

November 2016

Next review due by:

December 2019

Complies with: Scottish Housing Regulator Standards of Governance and Financial Management 5.3 and 5.4

APPENDIX 1

LIST OF RELATED POLICIES & PROCEDURES

Policies

[HS18 Office Safety Policy](#)

[HS09 Display Screen Equipment \(DSE\) Policy](#)

Procedures

HS03 Risk Assessment – Part 5 – ARK Premises inspection

[Data Archiving Guidelines](#)