
ACCESSING SAFETY KNOWLEDGE (ASK) SHEET: EMPLOYEES WORKING AT HOME & WORKER'S COMP & OSHA

ASK SHEET: INJURIES DUE TO WORKING FROM HOME

With employees working from home more, employees can be exposed to new workplace safety risks. Make sure your employees have been trained in working from home and you as the employer understand your obligations if injuries at home should occur.

Safety Training Tips

Here are some safety training tips for your workers working from home:

Provide your employees with the resources they need to set up an ergonomically correct home work station.

Remind your employees about the importance of stretching their legs and staying active even when working from home, including the importance of taking breaks.

Discuss that slips, trips, and falls still occur in the house, so employees should wear sturdy footwear and clear areas of clutter.

Talk to employees about staying aware of their surroundings, including fire and electrical dangers in the house.

Make sure to keep lines of communication open with remote workers.

Is an Injury at Home Recordable under OSHA

If an employee is working from home, that employee can be injured during the workday from items in the home. For example, in the middle of telecommuting for the company, employee hears their child crying outside and runs out to comfort them, tripping and breaking a leg in the process. This would not be a recordable injury as the injury is not directly related to the performance of work.

Under Section 1904.5(b)(7), injuries and illnesses that occur while an employee is working at home, including work in a home office, will be considered work-related if the injury or illness occurs while the employee is performing work for pay or compensation in the home, and the injury or illness is directly related to the performance of work rather than to the general home environment or setting.

For example, if an employee drops a box of work documents and injures his or her foot, the case is considered work-related. If an employee's fingernail is punctured by a needle from a sewing machine used to perform garment work at home, becomes infected and requires medical treatment, the injury is considered work-related. If an employee is injured because he or she trips on the family dog while rushing to answer a work phone call, the case is not considered work-related. If an employee working at home is electrocuted because of faulty home wiring, the injury is not considered work-related.

Is an Injury at Home Covered by Workers Compensation

In general, employees are covered for work-related injuries that occur outside the office or other workplace. The primary consideration is whether the injury is work-related. In examining whether an injury is work-related, workers compensation carriers analyze whether the employer was benefiting from the employee's actions when the injury occurred and did the employer require the employee to engage in the injury-causing activity.

If an employee reports that he was working from home and was injured while engaging in a work activity, for example, dropping a box of work documents on his foot, you should report the claim to your carrier for their review and investigation.