

## Be ready for inclement weather

September is National Preparedness Month. Bad weather can happen anytime. Be prepared with this to-do checklist:

- Stay informed. Listen to weather reports on the radio or on TV. A **watch** means severe weather is possible. A **warning** means severe weather is almost here.
- Follow advice for protecting yourself and your property, and evacuate if told to do so by public officials.
- Be aware of weather emergency hazards, such as falling trees, utility poles, and buildings; downed power lines; gas leaks; flooding; lightning; and ice, sleet, freezing rain, or drifting snow.
- Know and follow your workplace emergency plan. Respond to emergency signals, turn off equipment, perform any assigned duties, follow the evacuation route, meet in the designated area, and stay informed.
- Develop a home emergency plan. Prepare an emergency kit, bring outdoor items and furniture inside, and move to the safest part of the house.
- Be prepared for an evacuation. Plan and practice a home evacuation, keep emergency numbers near all home phones or in all cell phones, know all household members' work and school emergency plans, teach children when and how to call for emergency help, and designate a family meeting place and an out-of-area phone contact.



Owls should place both monitors at eye level.

# EMPLOYEE SAFETY NEWSLETTER

September 2018

## Workstation ergonomics

### *How to properly use a computer monitor*

Placing a computer monitor correctly is key to avoiding awkward body postures that lead to neck and back pain, as well as eyestrain.

#### How should you position the computer monitor?

Place the computer monitor so that you can easily read text displayed. Your head and torso should be upright, and your back should be supported by your chair. Position the monitor directly in front of you.

If you are working with printed materials, do not place the materials flat on a table. Instead, place the materials on a document holder that attaches to the top left or right corner of the monitor. Your documents should be close to your monitor and the same distance from your gaze. This will prevent awkward postures such as turning your head to see your screen or printed materials properly.

#### How do you adjust the monitor for eye level?

Place the top one-third of the computer monitor's screen at or directly below your natural gaze. Place the monitor between 18 and 24 inches from your eyes (or about one arm's length away.) If you reach out, your fingertips should be able to touch, or almost touch, the screen of your monitor.

Placing the monitor too far from you or too close to you can cause eyestrain and back and neck pain. Adjust the height of your chair, or remove or add risers under the monitor to adjust your viewing angle.

If you are a bifocal user, lower the monitor or raise the chair height so you can maintain the appropriate neck posture. Tilt the monitor up toward you if needed. Watch out for glare when adjusting the tilt of your monitor.

#### How much time do you spend using the monitor?

Do not stare at the computer monitor for long periods of time. This causes eye fatigue and dryness. Often, users will blink less when viewing a monitor. Every now and then, focus on objects that are far away.

Give your eye muscles a chance to relax. Look away from the screen, and blink at regular intervals to moisten your eyes. Alternate your tasks with other work duties that do not involve using the computer.

#### What is the proper amount of lighting to use?

Make sure you have proper lighting at your workstation. The light should be enough for you to clearly see the monitor screen and your printed materials but not so bright that there is a glare on the monitor screen. If available, use the monitor's function keys to adjust your brightness and contrast settings to reduce eyestrain.

## Make a household emergency plan

Businesses have an emergency plan in place for employees, but you should also have one at home.

**Outline the plan.** Sit down with all the members of your household and discuss the plan. Start with the parts of the plan. Your emergency plan should include:

- How emergency alerts and warnings are received,
- A shelter plan,
- Evacuation route(s), *and*
- A household communication plan.

Have a plan in place for how to contact one another. Make sure when you set a meeting place that it is familiar and easy to find. In addition, have an out-of-area contact available to you if you need to leave the area.

**Consider specifics.** You must tailor your plan to specific daily needs and responsibilities of your household. What does your particular household need? Discuss and establish responsibilities for people in the household concerning communication, care of children, business, pets, and other specific needs, like the operation of durable medical equipment. Factors to keep in mind include medical needs, disabilities, assisting others, different ages of members in your household, and locations that are frequented.

**Write it all down.** Fill out [a family emergency communication plan](#) online or use it as a guide to create your own plan.

**Practice makes perfect.** Don't wait for an emergency or unexpected disaster to happen. Practice your plan with your household now!



## Workstation ergonomics: Quiz

Choose the correct response to the following statements.

1. You should keep printed documents flat on a table when working at the computer. **True or False**
2. You should place the middle of your computer monitor's screen at or directly below eye level. **True or False**
3. You should place your computer monitor:
  - A. About 6 inches from your face
  - B. Approximately an arm's length away from you
  - C. About 3 inches below your chin
4. Staring at a computer monitor's screen for long periods of time can hurt your eyes. **True or False**
5. If you use bifocals, you should tilt your chin up to see the screen better. **True or False**

### Answers

**1. False.** When working at a computer, position printed materials so that they are at eye level with your screen. Your documents should be close to your monitor and the same distance from your gaze. **2. False.** Position your computer monitor's screen so that the top one-third of the screen is at or directly below your natural gaze. **3. B. Approximately an arm's length away from you.** Your computer monitor should be placed between 18 and 24 inches from your eyes (or about one arm's length away). Your fingertips should be able to brush your computer monitor's screen. **4. True.** Staring at your computer monitor screen for long periods of time can cause eye fatigue and dryness. Look away from your monitor now and then and blink repeatedly. **5. False.** Lower the monitor or raise your chair up so that you can clearly see the screen without hurting your neck.

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## Prepare for an earthquake

An earthquake is caused by the breaking and shifting of underground rock. The ground will suddenly and rapidly shake during an earthquake. Earthquakes can happen anywhere and without warning. They can do damage to buildings; cause heavy items to fall; and can trigger landslides, flash floods, fires, and tsunamis. Here's what you can do now to prepare for an earthquake:

**Secure objects** in place, like televisions and objects that hang on walls. Store heavy or breakable items on low shelves or tables.

**Practice Drop, Cover, and then Hold On!** at least twice a year at home and at work. This is the practice you should use during an earthquake. Drop to the ground on your hands and knees. Cover your head and neck with your arms. Crawl only as far as needed to get to cover from falling materials. Hold on to any sturdy furniture until the shaking stops. Under a sturdy table is a good place to be.

**Develop a communications plan** for home. Know where to meet if you get separated in the event of an earthquake. Have an out-of-area or out-of-state contact available to you in case you need to evacuate.

**Get a kit together.** Make a supply kit that includes food and water for at least 3 days, a flashlight, a fire extinguisher, extra batteries, cell phone chargers, and a whistle. Also include any medication you or your household may need. Keep the needs of your pets in mind as well.

**Inspect your home** for any structural issues that would make it more vulnerable to collapse during an earthquake.