Display Screen Equipment
It is requirement of The Health and Safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regulations 1992 as amended by the Health and Safety (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2002 to minimise the risks in DSE work by carrying out a suitable and sufficient assessment of the workstations where staff habitually uses DSE as a significant part of their normal work.

Workstations include;

- display screen equipment keyboard and software
- any disk drive, telephone, modem, printer, document holder, work chair and work desk
- the immediate environment around the display screen equipment, noise, lighting, temperature and space etc.

Risks to Health
There are 3 main risks to health from DSE work:
- Upper limb disorders (also called repetitive strain injuries) which cause pain in hands wrists, shoulders, neck and back. These disorders are caused by poor design or wrongly adjusted equipment, sitting for too long in one position etc.
- Eyes and eyesight effects including headaches, sore eyes and blurred vision. Work with DSE can show up pre-existing eye defects such as short sight that workers were not previously aware of. These effects may be caused by lack of breaks, badly designed, adjusted or positioned equipment, poor lighting, flickering screens etc.
- Careful design, selection and position of DSE, good design of the user’s workplace, environment, task, training, and consultation can reduce stress and physical fatigue.

Workstation Standards
Employers must make sure that all workstations comply with the regulations set out in a schedule to the regulations. These include; the screen must be adjustable to swivel and tilt, and should be free of reflective glare and reflections. The keyboard should be tilt able and separate from the screen so as to allow the user to find a comfortable working position. The work desk and surface shall allow flexible arrangement of the screen, keyboard and related equipment. The work chair shall adjust in both height and tilt to allow the user the freedom of movement and position. The work environment must also be
taken into consideration to allow for adequate lighting, the regulation of reflections and glare, noise and heat produced by equipment.

In addition to the risk assessment you must also ensure;
• that eye and eyesight tests are made available to all habitual users at your expense.
• user’s work on DSE is periodically interrupted by breaks or changes of activity.
• that adequate health and safety training is provided so operators can use their DSE and Workstation safely.

Someone who is familiar with the regulations should carry out the assessment. A clear record of the assessment should be kept and revised when necessary. Detailed information is available in the H.S.E. guidance and approved Code of Practice (ISBN 0 71760735 6) Display Screen Equipment available from any H.M.S.O. bookshop or www.hse.gov.uk

LAPTOP COMPUTERS
Since the introduction of the Health and Safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regulations 1992 (DSE Regulations), the use of portable or laptop computers has become far more widespread. Regulation 1 (4) (d) of the DSE Regulations states that: “portable display screen equipment is exempt from the Regulations if it is not in prolonged use”. However, portable equipment that is habitually used by a DSE “user” as a significant part of his or her normal work should be regarded as covered by the Regulations. Additionally, in July 1997 the HSE advised that: “employers should ensure that users have sufficient training to enable them to recognise and avoid risk factors when using portable DSE”.

It is important that an employer recognises that a laptop should not be used when there is any realistic alternative, e.g. it is unlikely that an employer could justify the significant use of a standalone laptop within an office environment. For those who use a laptop whilst away from the main work location, the logical step is to provide a “docking station”, or at least a full-sized screen, for use whenever the individual is at that location.

The key problems
Laptop computers were never designed for prolonged use. As a result of the need for portability, some compromises are necessarily made in their construction in terms of smaller keyboards & screens, etc that tend to make them less comfortable to use. Wherever possible a separate mouse should be used, rather than the ball-type device or other integral devices found on many laptops. Additionally, the equipment is frequently used in constricted environments (e.g. train seats, meeting rooms) and the arrangement of the screen and keyboard tend to mean that laptop users work with the head and shoulders bent forward with an awkward arm, wrist and hand positions. To combat this, users should be aware of the most appropriate types of position for DSE use according to the Regulations, although these vary according to the differences in individual physical characteristics such as height and length.
of limbs. It is also important that the user varies the working position and takes frequent breaks.

**Risk assessment and training**
Under the DSE Regulations, employers have a duty to assess: the whole workstation and working environment of the user; the work being done; and the particular needs of individual members of staff. Where risks are identified, the employer must take action to reduce these "so far as is reasonably practicable". The nature of laptop usage means it may not be realistic to assess all the environments in which the equipment will be used. It is important, however, to look at any situations where there is a likelihood of significant regular use. Employers must provide training and information relating to the safe use of the workstation. The schedule to the DSE Regulations stipulates the features that should be present within a user’s workstation (e.g. suitable furniture, facilities for adjustments) and, because of the varied environments in which portable DSE may be used, this training will need to be far more extensive for the laptop user.