

THE CITY AND COUNTY OF CARDIFF

CODE OF GUIDANCE

WORK SPACE

All workplaces need to provide people with enough free space to allow them to carry out their work activities safely, use equipment safely, get to and from their workstations and move about work areas with reasonable ease and without risk of injury.

Purpose

The purpose of this Code of Guidance is to give advice on the statutory provisions that are in place in respect of 'work space', and the need to ensure there is adequate space available to allow work activities to be carried out with proper regard to health and safety.

This Code does not deal with activities falling within the scope of The Confined Spaces Regulations 1997.

The Code of Guidance addresses the following legal requirements in respect of work space:-

1. The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 applies to all work activities. It sets out the general duties of employers towards their employees and members of the public, and the duties employees have to themselves and to each other. Although work space is not mentioned specifically, employers are required to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health safety and welfare at work of all their employees. This includes providing a working environment that is both safe and without risks to health in respect of space.
2. The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 require employers to undertake suitable and sufficient assessments of risk to employees in respect of all work activities. This should include a consideration of the space that is available to carry out the activity, and to implement measures that are reasonably practical to reduce the risk of injury.
3. Employers also have duties in respect of room dimensions and space that are set out in the Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992, and the accompanying Approved Code of Practice (ACOP) and Guidance. These Regulations require *that "every room where people work should have sufficient floor area, height and unoccupied space for purposes of health, safety and welfare."* The Regulations do not specify a minimum space standard, however the ACOP does recommend the following:-

- Workrooms should have enough free space to allow people to get to and from workstations and to move within the room with ease. The number of people who can work in any particular room at any one time will depend not only on the size of the room, but on the space taken up by furniture, fittings, equipment, and on the layout of the room.
 - Workrooms, except those where people only work for short periods, need to be of sufficient height (from floor to ceiling) over most of the room to enable safe access to workstations. Low beams or other obstructions should be clearly marked.
 - The total volume of workrooms, when empty, should provide at least 11 cubic metres of space for each person normally working there. When making this calculation those parts of the workroom that are more than 3.0 metres in height should be disregarded.
 - As a guide, in a typical room where the ceiling is 2.4 metres high, a floor area of approximately 4.6 m² will be needed to achieve a space of 11m³. Where the ceiling is 3.0 metres high or higher the minimum floor area will be approximately 3.7m² per person. It is however important to note that the Regulations require sufficient **unoccupied** space to be provided, and so the figure of 11 cubic metres per person must be viewed as a minimum and may be insufficient if, for example, much of the room is taken up by furniture etc.
4. The provision of adequate work space also features within the Construction (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1996. Employers have a duty to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that construction work places have safe means of access and egress, are properly arranged, and have sufficient working space to ensure the construction work can be carried out safely.
 5. The Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998 require employers to ensure work equipment is properly located in order to reduce risk of injury to equipment users and others. This includes ensuring there is sufficient space between the moving parts of equipment and any other fixed or moving objects nearby. There must be adequate space to operate and maintain equipment safely and to allow materials to be supplied and/or removed in a safe manner.
 6. The Electricity at Work Regulations 1989 place a duty on employers to ensure that sufficient space, access and illumination are provided while people are working on, at or near electrical equipment in order that they may work safely. The requirement is not restricted to those

circumstances where live conductors are exposed but applies where any work is being done in circumstances that may give rise to danger.

7. To ensure compliance with the Fire Precautions (Workplace) Regulations 1997, corridors and stairways that form part of the fire escape route must be suitable and of sufficient size for the number of people who are likely to need to use them. A specific fire risk assessment must be carried out to determine the adequacy of the escape route dimensions, however corridors and stairways on the route should generally be at least 1 metre wide.
8. A consideration of working space must also form part the specific risk assessments that are required by the Manual Handling Operations Regulations 1992. When carrying out manual handling activities there will be an increased risk of injury if space constraints prevent good posture or hinder working at a comfortable height. Restricted headroom will cause a stooping posture and furniture, fixtures or other obstructions may increase the need for twisting or leaning. Constricted working areas and narrow gangways will also hinder the manoeuvring of bulky loads.
9. Work space will also need to be considered when carrying out risk assessments under the Health and Safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regulations 1992. Users or operators of display screen equipment should have sufficient space to be able to get to and from their workstations with ease, locate items safely and be able to achieve a comfortable working position.

Further Information:

Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974
Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999
Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992
Construction (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1996
Electricity at Work Regulations 1989
Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998
Manual Handling Operations Regulations 1992
Health and Safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regulations 1992
Fire Precautions (Workplace) Regulations 1997