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Occupational safety training for smart working workers

When it comes to workplace safety, smart working requires adapting and rethinking risk detection and implementing appropriate training programs

Smart working has proven to be a useful work mode even beyond the health emergency. This solution requires some adjustments to comply with **occupational safety regulations**.

The main peculiarity lies in the different work location in which the employee works. This can lead to different risks, which must be properly estimated and prevented, and a possible change in occupational safety training.

Occupational safety risks in smart working

Smart working offers greater flexibility and freedom to work, but it also entails a number of safety risks for remote workers. It is essential to identify and understand the potential hazards and specific risks associated with this work mode in order to implement preventive measures and **appropriate training programs.**

- Ergonomics not suited to the work mode
- Inadequate computer security
- Social isolation
- Injuries similar to those associated with onsite work
- Accidents specific to the different work environment

The absence of an **ergonomic work environment** can lead to physical problems such as muscle aches, back injuries, eye disorders, and fatigue. Using an appropriate workstation and adopting proper ergonomic practices are key to preventing such risks.

Working remotely, employees are exposed to potential cyber threats, such as hacker attacks, data theft, or unauthorized access to sensitive information. Data protection and the adoption of **cybersecurity measures** are essential to prevent data security breaches.

An unstable Internet connection can cause communication disruptions, work slowdowns, and data loss. Stable connection and reliable access to online resources are crucial to ensuring an efficient work environment.

Remote work can result in a sense of **social isolation**, with less interaction with colleagues and lack of support and information sharing. This can negatively affect **workers' mental health** and well-being.

Possible injuries then, may be the same as those that would occur in the normal work setting, with the aggravating factor that first aid procedures and equipment may not be readily available in the new work location. To these can be added some risks and injuries specific to the new context. One trivial example out of all: not all homes are equipped with chairs or armchairs that have five points of support in accordance with safety regulations.

Health and safety risks for smart working workers can have a significant impact on their overall well-being. Failure to adequately address these risks can lead to physical problems, such as musculoskeletal injuries and visual fatigue, as well as psychological disorders related to social isolation and work stress.

It is critical that smart working workers receive the appropriate training to recognize and prevent these risks. Work safety training programs specific to smart working can cover topics such as ergonomics, cybersecurity, stress management, and promoting general well-being.

Developing smart working safety training programs

Adapting traditional training programs to the smart working context is critical to providing effective and relevant training.

Traditional job safety training programs usually focus on aspects of the physical work environment and related safety practices. However, in smart working, workers are in different settings, such as their own homes or coworking spaces, and face unique risks. Therefore, training programs need to be adapted to specifically address the challenges of smart working.

Training programs in smart working should include information on:

- the proper configuration of the remote workstation
- good ergonomic practices
- the management of information security
- the prevention of internet-related risks
- the promotion of mental and physical well-being

It is important for workers to acquire specific skills to identify, address and report potential risks.

Tools and resources for safety training

To ensure effective safety training in smart working, it is critical to use appropriate tools and resources that make the learning process engaging and interactive.

eLearning platforms provide a virtual environment where smart working workers can access safety training courses in an autonomous and personalized manner. These platforms allow uploading of training materials, explanatory videos, interactive quizzes and online learning modules.

Through eLearning platforms, workers can access safety training courses anytime and from anywhere, using devices such as computers, tablets or smartphones. This provides flexibility and accessibility to suit the needs of smart working workers.

eLearning platforms also allow users to track their progress and assess their learning through quizzes and tests. This data can be used to evaluate the effectiveness of training programs and identify any areas for improvement.

However, to be considered valid, safety courses must be delivered by platforms that meet certain technical and instructional requirements.

Best practices for effective training in smart working

To ensure effective safety training in smart working, it is important to adopt best practices that are tailored to the **specific needs of remote workers**.

Safety training programs must be tailored to address the specific risks of smart working and the needs of remote workers. This can be achieved through a proper analysis of the risks specific to smart working and remote working environments.

This analysis must produce training content and materials that focus on the skills and knowledge needed to address the specific risks of smart working. For example, provide ergonomic guidelines specific to creating a safe work environment at home.

Actively involving employees in smart working safety training is critical to maximize learning and application of the skills learned.

It is important to provide opportunities for smart working employees to actively participate in training, such as through online discussions, study groups or collaborative projects. This promotes interaction and sharing of experience and knowledge among participants.

Smart workers should be able to provide regular **feedback** during the training process to enable employees to monitor their progress and identify any areas for improvement. Feedback can be provided through quizzes, assessments or individual discussions. This feedback should be properly evaluated to verify the effectiveness of training and employee learning through knowledge tests, skills assessments, or performance evaluations.

It is important to provide ongoing updates on smart working safety training programs. This is for two different reasons. First, for a regulatory reason: the employer is required to provide employees with periodic updates on workplace safety. Second, to keep up with any new technologies and best practices.

Monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of training programs

To ensure the effectiveness of smart working safety training programs, it is necessary to **continuously monitor and evaluate the results and impact of training**. This allows any gaps or areas for improvement to be identified and changes to be made to ensure that programs are adequate and meet the needs of smart working workers. Due consideration should be given to the fact that by its nature, smart working is carried out in locations that are removed from the direct control of those responsible for safety: if an injury in this mode is more akin to a household accident than a workplace accident, the hybrid condition makes it necessary to adapt the methods of supervision and control in order to keep prevention and intervention procedures adequate. Some tools for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of training programs may be:

- Evaluation questionnaires
- Satisfaction surveys
- Analysis of incident data
- Direct observation

To evaluate the adequacy of safety training programs in smart working, it is appropriate to assess whether the training programs have achieved their objectives in terms of improving the knowledge, skills and adoption of safe behaviors by smart working workers. It is indicated to collect feedback from the instructors or trainers involved in the training programs on the quality of the content, the effectiveness of the teaching methodologies and the appropriateness of the materials used.

To design safety training programs appropriate to the smart working context, it is important to involve key stakeholders, such as safety managers, supervisors, or HR departments.