## OHS Committee – IT Users’ Issues

### Physical issues

eye strain, inadequate lighting, repetitive strain injury (tendonitis), excessive hours without a break, poor air conditioning, space at and around workstations, radiation, lack of ventilation around photocopiers poorly designed chairs that do not provide the user with adequate back support; or poorly designed jobs and tasks that demand prolonged work in a fixed posture.

### Ergonomic issues

Ergonomics is the scientific, interdisciplinary study of individuals and their physical relationship to the work environment.

Just as computers have changed the way we work, it is becoming increasingly necessary for us to change the way we operate them. There are concerns over the proper and safe use of computer equipment to prevent injury. Safe computer use, including body posture, typing and mousing methods, and workstation adjustments will help prevent musculoskeletal problems.

In addition to musculoskeletal problems, computer users may experience temporary symptoms such as eye strain, burning eyes, blurred vision, focusing difficulties, and headaches. (see [Vision & Eye Strain](http://www.tifaq.org/information/vision.html))

The major causes of strain are:

* Poor body alignment - take the time to set up your work environment to fit you.
* Prolonged positions - take a short break every 20 minutes or so to shift positions, walk, stretch
* Repetitive movements - try to vary your work, so that you use different muscles.
* Inadequate vision - strains posture as well as eyes - check eyes annually, you may need special glasses

### Psychological issues

In the majority of cases the individual's symptoms of distress met the criteria for an Adjustment Disorder and to a lesser extent, Major Depressive Episode and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. The fact that most claimants were assessed as meeting the criteria for an Adjustment Disorder is a favourable prognostic sign for rehabilitation, given that the symptoms are treatable and tend to resolve within a relatively brief period with the appropriate psychotherapeutic and medical assistance.

### Biological issues

Biological agents are found in many sectors of employment. They are rarely visible and so workers are not always able to appreciate the risks they pose. They include bacteria, viruses, fungi (yeasts and moulds) and parasites.

### Chemical issues

Chemicals are a part of everyone's life. At least 400 million tonnes of chemicals are produced each year worldwide and at least 1,200 *new* chemicals are developed each year in North America alone.

For the majority of chemicals used and developed, there is no information about their possible immediate or long-term health effects, yet workers are still required to work with potentially toxic substances. Many workers are required to work - without any protection - with chemicals that are **known** to be hazardous to human health.

Nearly all workers today are exposed to some sort of chemical hazard since chemicals are used in every type of industry. Therefore it is important to learn as much as possible about the chemicals you work with.

### Radiation issues

Radiation is the general term used to describe electromagnetic waves such as radio waves, visible light, and gamma rays and particles which are emitted from radioactive materials. Some forms of radiation have sufficient energy to ionise atoms (remove an electron from the atom) as they strike them:

Ultra violet radiation

Infra-red radiation

Lasers

Ultrasound

### Electrical issues

Due to its commonplace existence in everyday life, electricity and the hazards associated with it are too often taken for granted.

Electricity has the potential to seriously injure or kill. The fitting of Residual current Devices (RCDs) will reduce the likelihood of electrical shock or electrocutions. It is also important to ensure that electrical equipment are regularly inspected and maintained.