



Are your employees ergonomically prepared to work from home?

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We've settled into a new normal. Because of the coronavirus, the country has been put on hold, closing restaurants and many retail stores and malls, implementing social distancing when out and strongly encouraging people to stay home. This means most workers have opened up their home offices, changing daily routines and structure, including how we work.

Moving a traditional employee to a full-time work-from-home environment is a learning curve for most. Trying to find and set up the right place in their home to work can be challenging, and oftentimes ergonomics safety is forgotten. In most cases, people aren't prepared with the proper equipment and need to work with what they have. There can also be distractions that one might not be used to throughout the day. With so many bank employees working from home, practicing and enforcing good ergonomics is particularly important, as it could pose potential liability issues for an employer, including liability relating to workers' compensation or cyber risks.

If available, employees should utilize auxiliary equipment that works with the laptop, including a keyboard, mouse and monitor. Having a standard, adjustable office chair and a desk is helpful, but it is possible these are not accessible to all employees.

While Intact has transitioned to a long-term work from home plan, we would like to share the resources we use, provided by Entrac, an Intact partner, that may help you.

Consider the following tips for working effectively and comfortably:

1. Set your schedule

- a) Try to maintain your regular hours. This helps maintain a work-life balance, and continue to let your manager and colleagues know when you are available.
- b) Continue your morning routine and prepare as if you were going into the office (shower, get dressed and enjoy your coffee).
- c) Create a signal that indicates the end of a workday – whatever is needed to shut down and unwind. This may be logging off to cook dinner, walk the dog, or exercise.

2. Define your workspace

- a) Find a quiet and comfortable space that mimics an office environment as much as possible using the equipment listed above.
- b) Customize your space like you do in the office for motivation and inspiration. If possible, allow for daylight to keep your space bright.
- c) If needed, set a schedule with others in your home regarding your space when working.

3. Adjusting your workspace

- a) Eyes should be level with the top of the screen.
- b) Your screen should be at least an arm's length in front of you.
- c) Make sure your forearms are supported.
- d) Knees should be at a 90 degree angle, thighs parallel to the floor and feet flat on the floor.
- e) Ensure your back is fully supported in your chair.

4. Utilize company technology

- a) Always use a VPN to connect to the network or ensure you're on a secure connection. Increased cyber threats are expected during this time.
- b) If available, forward your office extension to your mobile phone.
- c) If available, use instant messaging or video chat tools to stay connected with teams.
- d) Consider offering resources for parents with children at home.

5. Practice self-care

- a. Take breaks. Step away from your workspace by eating lunch in a different room, take a walk outside, or stand up and stretch.
 - i. Get up at least once every hour and stretch several times a day.
- b. Try to plan social interaction in your day.
- c. Stay hydrated.
- d. Add a clock-out time to your calendar to avoid overworking.

Practicing good ergonomics is not only important to health and wellness, both physically and mentally, but it's crucial when trying to reduce risk as an employer. While it may be challenging to replicate the environment of a physical location, it is important to implement the good ergonomic practices that are already in place at the bank location.

To learn more about how Intact Financial Services can help you manage your unique risks, please contact Craig M. Collins, President, at ccollins@intactinsurance.com or 952.852.2434.

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