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1. Introduction

As a responsible employer Royal Holloway Students' Union (RHSU) is committed to the provision of workroom environments which are, as far as reasonably practicable, and in accordance with the relevant statutory provisions, of a reasonable temperature.

The Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992 require that the temperature within workrooms is 'reasonable', which is defined as a range between 13 Celsius for heavy work to 20 Celsius for sedentary tasks. The approved code of practice recommends that office temperature should be a minimum of 16 Celsius to provide a consistent level of comfort for employees.

It is recognised that comfort is a subjective matter, and that extremes of temperature may adversely affect employee performance. Most of the time and for the majority of employees they will feel comfortable with their work conditions, however employees may become too hot or too cold; this is recognised as 'Thermal discomfort'. Thermal discomfort does have a physiological impact, but may also increase the risk of accident or injury through loss of concentration, emotional reactions or physical impairment.

2. Employer Responsibilities

The Approved Code of Practice (L24) require employers to maintain a reasonable temperature in the workroom, and to risk assess the impact of thermal discomfort for any task completed outside of identified workroom locations (external working, cold storage, glass houses) and, where necessary, take action to address them.

Responsibility is delegated to departmental line managers who are committed to regularly assessing workroom temperatures and the risks associated with thermal discomfort within SU Facilities and planned activities.

Temperature readings will be monitored, in close proximity to work stations, to ensure a reasonable temperature is maintained via the use of a building management system (BMS). Thermometers will be located in suitable locations to enable temperature readings to be monitored. Where action is required adjustments to heating systems, ventilation and use of cooling systems will be undertaken.

Where adherence to the temperature guidelines cannot be applied, for example in rooms with continuous exposure to the external environment, cold rooms or glass houses risk assessments will be completed and appropriate measures identified to mitigate thermal discomfort.

PPE will be provided for employees where local heating or cooling systems fail to provide reasonable comfort, and where these issues are protracted suitable temporary alternative working arrangements will be agreed.

3. Employees' Responsibilities

All employees have a duty to take reasonable steps to ensure that they do not place themselves or others at risk of thermal discomfort. They are also expected to co-operate fully in complying with any procedures that may be introduced as a measure to protect the safety and well-being of our staff and visitors.

Where employees are able to control temperature within their workroom, they must be cognisant of other individuals who work in the same location, and be considerate of the impact changes in temperature may have on those individuals. Any changes to localised temperature controls must be reinstated at the end of the employee's shift.

It is the responsibility of all employees to be aware of the potential risks in their working area and the tasks requested. They must complete a visual assessment prior to commencement and raise any concerns immediately with their line manager. If an accident or near miss occurs the correct reporting procedure is to be followed, following RHSU's Accident/Incident Policy if necessary.

4. Thermal Discomfort

The terms comfort and discomfort are used when describing the impact of temperature. Where discomfort is taken to extremes the likely result could involve serious harm or injury, and in the most severe cases death.

Heat stress is the stress caused by the effects of heat to the systems of the human body, if the body's core temperature of 37 Celsius increases or decreases serious harm to the individual may occur. Mitigating the risk of heat stress can also impact on the employee's ability to perform, waterproof clothing and humid environments can impair the body's ability to regulate core temperatures, similarly increased layering and use of thermal gloves may increase dexterity issues and cause errors.

The environment in which an employee works can have a significant effect. The most significant environmental factors include (but are not exclusive):

- Ambient temperature
- Amount of radiant heat from sunlight or from hot processes
- Air movement, particularly if very low and
- Humidity

i. Cold Environments

Risk assessment of cold discomfort requires consultation with employees or their representatives. A walkthrough of the workplace will not suffice, nor will simple reliance on air temperature measurement. Proper measurement of environmental and worker-based variables must be considered, with multiple air temperature measurements taken from different areas within the locality.

Generally extended exposure to cold is required before becoming affected, consideration must be taken on the impact that may result as the consequence of an accident; which could be from either extended or rapid exposure.

It is reasonable that employees should be allowed frequent short breaks in a dry, warm location when they are tasked with working in cold environments. It is also reasonable to review whether the task could be completed at another time when the temperature is warmer.

If the environment is considered too cold, and the simple solutions of heating and protective clothing have been addressed, then other suitable options should be considered (Infra-red radiant heating, directional heating etc). In these circumstances a lone-working safe system should be employed, utilising a buddy system or constant communication to ensure the risk of exposure is mitigated.

ii. Hot Environments

Risk assessment for hot discomfort requires consultation with employees, taking consideration of work activity and relative humidity in relation to the physical condition of the employee and their age.

Generally heat exposure is more rapid, with factors such as high humidity, confined working environments, exposure to direct / amplified sunlight and work activity causing the body's regulatory system to be impaired. This can impact in differing ways:

- Heat Stroke – rapid increase in core temperature over 40 Celsius with potentially lethal consequences
- Heat Exhaustion – prolonged exposure to heat resulting in elevated core temperature resulting with a need to take extended recovery time post task, potentially increasing sick leave
- Heat Fatigue – prolonged exposure to heat resulting in sluggish performance, lack of concentration and mild fatigue, resulting in increased risk of accidents and injury
- Skin Disorders – Heat rash 'prickly heat', development of blisters and blocked glands due to constant wetness of the skin from increased sweating (humidity / Waterproof clothing)
- Heat Cramps – muscular cramps caused by dehydration due to increased sweating, high humidity, layering and heavy working
- Solar radiation – external workers use protective barrier creams to protect against sunburn, but prolonged exposure to solar radiation continues, core body temperature continues to elevate. Barrier creams inhibit the body's natural regulatory systems.

Where the risks are unacceptable proper controls are required, these can be engineered controls in internal spaces such as:

- Insulation of hot surfaces to prevent heat exchange to the environment
- Air-cooling plant (air conditioning / movement)
- Local installation of fans, note fans have no cooling effect when air temperature is over 27 Celsius, but will dry the air to enable sweating to be more effective
- Provision of shading to reduce solar gain (blinds, awnings, solar film)
- Provision of rest facilities

5. Monitoring

The implementation of this Policy will be monitored at departmental level with any accidents, incidents or near misses being recorded and reported centrally.

The CEO will produce annual accident/incident statistics which will be circulated to the Board of Trustees and Health & Safety Committee. Such reports will facilitate a critical review of trends and necessary corrective action.