



### **Keeping Work-From-Home Employees Safe While Reducing Workers' Compensation Claims**

COVID-19 has fundamentally changed America's workplaces, requiring an exponential number of employees to work from home in order to ensure business continuity and to limit employee exposure to the coronavirus. However, employers must keep in mind that having employees working remotely does not exempt companies from enforcing safety requirements of the regular workplace.

#### **An Extension of the Regular Workforce**

Employers are obligated under federal and state safety laws to provide a safe and secure work environment for employees. This extends to employees working from home or remotely. An off-premises workspace should always be treated as an extension of the regular workforce regarding safety requirements. This includes addressing safety issues in a specific remote work and safety policy so employees have a clear understanding of what to be aware of.

#### **Developing a Safety Policy**

At minimum, a basic safety policy should require employees to conduct an assessment of their workplace and report any hazards to their employer. This can include:

- A discussion regarding ergonomic considerations.
- A review of safe workplace best practices.
- How to report any work-related incidents or injuries.
- Protocols for evacuating from the home or temporary workplace to a safe location.
- How to contact the employer in case of an emergency.

### **Realizing Workplace Responsibilities Are the Same**

Remember, most health and safety roles and responsibilities are the same for at-home workers as in the workplace, including:

- The immediate reporting of workplace injuries to management.
- Following through with all requirements for safety education and training.
- The duty for work-from-home employees to follow safe work procedures at all times.

### **Addressing the New Normal**

It's also important for employers to think in advance about certain safety considerations that will need to be addressed differently for employees working remotely. For example:

- Ensuring that employees know who to report their specific safety concerns to.
- Knowing how ergonomic assessments will be performed and control measures implemented.
- Having a plan for how to follow up on reported incidents.

**Have questions? Talk with a team leader!**

Best Regards,

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