

April 2020

## Working from Home Safety Edition

Dear RETRO Members,

Safety and health COVID-19 practices goes beyond just social distancing, cover coughs and sneezing and staying at home if you're ill. Many people are dealing with a new reality – telecommuting. Working from home may be completely new for some, while others may have occasionally experienced working remotely, such as during inclement weather. So, this month's packet will focus on tips to help you work safely in your remote location.

### MAKE YOUR SPACE WORK FOR YOU

Your workspace might be a kitchen or dining room table, so use a little creativity. Here are some ideals to strive for when creating a computer workstation:

- Assume a relaxed, tension-free posture in your neck and shoulders
- Place your elbows at a 90° angle
- Keep your wrists protected from sharp or hard edges, and in a neutral position
- Make sure the mouse is at the same height and distance from the screen as the keyboard
- Ensure adequate lower back support
- Keep your knees at a 90° angle
- Keep your hips at a 90° angle
- Position your feet flat on the floor or supported by a footrest
- Make sure the height of your work surface is appropriate
- Sit at the correct distance from the monitor: about 24"
- Keep computer monitor at, or slightly below, eye level



See what you have around your home to help you achieve this. Possibly prop your monitor up on some boxes to get it to the right height, or use boxes or tubs as a footrest, if needed. Place a towel under your wrists to act as a rest and protect from sharp edges.

### **CONNECT WITH TEAMMATES to maintain mental health**

Working from home means less in-person interaction with your colleagues, but it does not mean you can't connect with them in other ways. Scheduling video chats or meetings is a fantastic way to keep interaction with your coworkers going. If you don't have video capabilities, regular phone calls can also help keep you connected. In addition, you can plan or participate in fun activities with your remote colleagues, such as virtual coffee breaks, group walking challenges or sharing photos of your unique homework spaces. While it is important to avoid distractions during your workday, taking time to interact with fellow employees can help you avoid feelings of isolation and make your day feel more "normal."



### **MANAGING STRESS proactively**

A crisis can occur at any time, whether it's the result of a personal problem, a workplace incident or a larger societal issue like the COVID-19 pandemic. The resulting stress from a crisis can put serious strain on workers, but certain steps can help manage this anxiety.

The first step in managing stress is facing it. In stressful situations, it can be tempting to ignore the cause of our anxiety and focus on something else, but this only compounds the problem. Stress rarely goes away on its own but focusing on the real cause of our anxiety gives us a chance to address it.

A crisis might have you taking on new tasks, looking after others or adding multiple responsibilities onto your already-full plate. This might be on top of health concerns you are dealing with or worries about a family member or co-worker. To address the situation and keep yourself from feeling overwhelmed, focus on the smaller issues that you can control and build from there.

Ultimately, managing your stress during a crisis may require action, but the right steps will depend on your situation. If a crisis has you working from home and looking after your kids while trying to get your normal job done, talk to your supervisor about your options. Maybe

you can work different hours or plan for certain breaks when you can focus on your kids, but you first have to identify the issue and talk it through.

If you are concerned about going into work or handling new job responsibilities during a crisis, voice these concerns to learn more about what precautions your organization is taking. If you are handling safety-sensitive tasks or learning new responsibilities, take your time and ensure you have the proper Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). The middle of a crisis is not the time for shortcuts, so follow the proper steps for every job and encourage your co-workers to do the same.

We want all to take the time to be safe! We hope that this COVID-19 situation will subside quickly and we all can get back to regular business!

If you have questions or would like additional assistance, please contact me.

Thinking safety for you,

***Rick Means***

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