

SEATING AT WORK

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INTRODUCTION

Regulation 11 of the Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992 requires that a suitable seat be provided for each person at work in the workplace whose work includes operations of a kind that the work (or a substantial part of it) can or must be done sitting. The seat must be suitable for the person for whom it is provided and a suitable footrest must be provided where necessary.

Standing for long periods, and sitting in unsuitable chairs, can result in tiredness and discomfort. This affects employees' general welfare and can have adverse consequences for health or safety.

There are a number of basic requirements which all seating should meet. Seating should:-

- * support the worker in a position in which she/he can work comfortably and efficiently.
- * allow the worker to change position easily and without losing support.
- * not press uncomfortably on the buttocks or thighs.
- * cater for any special needs.
- * suit the workstation.

DESIGN OF SEATING

There is no single, standard formula for the design of seating used at work. In booklet HS (G) 57 'Seating at Work' design guidance is provided for a typical adjustable chair suitable for many work situations. The guidance refers to the seat, backrest, armrest, footrest, mobility, adjustability, gas chair lifts (which may have particular safety considerations), upholstery and durability.

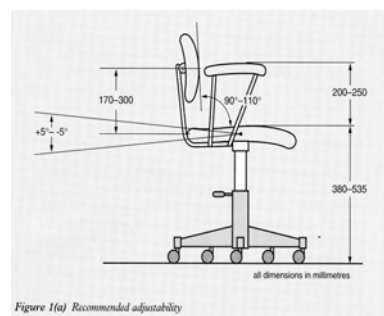


Figure 1(a) Recommended adjustability

The following diagrams indicate recommendations for a typical adjustable chair suitable for many work situations.

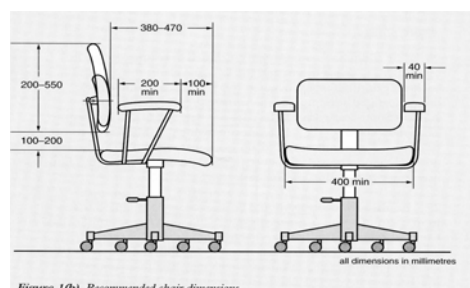


Figure 1(b) Recommended chair dimensions

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SELECTION OF SEATING

Adjustable chairs are preferable because of their greater versatility. An analysis of the tasks required to be carried out will help in the selection process. The following points should be considered:-

- * chairs should be comfortable to sit in for substantial periods and normally be adjustable.
- * seat and backrest to be firmly padded.
- * armrests should not inhibit movement close to the worktop or restrict arm movement.
- * the distance between the seat and working height (desktop, keyboard etc) should be between 210mm and 300mm. The underside of the worktop should clear the seat by at least 170mm.
- * backrest to be of suitable size and shape to support the lower and middle back.
- * requirements of workers with special needs (e.g. mobility problems) need to be borne in mind.

SEATING IN USE

Workers should be aware of the means of adjustment of any chair they use and the necessity of reporting any deficiency or problem promptly. Proper maintenance of seating should also be ensured.

Some examples of seating and workstation layout:

1. Work with Machinery: Design should be such as to avoid strained positions; hand controls to be within easy reach and easy to use; sufficient room for arms and legs; non-standard chairs may be suitable in some situations.
2. Keyboard Work: specific guidance can be found in the Display Screen Equipment element of this manual but general considerations will include appropriate height of equipment within the workstation and document holders.
3. Check-Outs: all frequent tasks should be kept within easy reach (about 400mm) of the worker; sitting close to the task without pressure on legs; consultation with workers themselves; not to be fixed to the floor; adjustment controls to be easily accessible and operable from a sitting position; comfortable and suitable upholstery; adjustable and well padded especially at the front edge.

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CHECKLIST - SEATING

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|----|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|----|
| 1. | Is work carried out at your premises which includes operations of a kind that the work (or a substantial part of it) can or must be done sitting? | YES | NO |
| 2. | Do you give full consideration to the requirements of seating for all appropriate work activities? | YES | NO |
| 3. | Are your chairs adjustable, mobile, stable, of suitable design (armrests/ backrests/padding etc) and suitable for the workstation? | YES | NO |
| 4. | Do you give consideration re: seating to workers with special needs? | YES | NO |
| 5. | Do your workers understand how to adjust the seat to ensure comfortable and efficient working? | YES | NO |
| 6. | Do you ensure seating is properly maintained? | YES | NO |

REFERENCE / FURTHER DETAILS

- *1. HS(G)57 - Seating at Work (HSE) ISBN 0-11-885431-3
- *2. Book 24 - Workplace Health, Safety and Welfare - Approved Code of Practice (pp 15 & 16) (HSE) ISBN 0-11-886333-9

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- * Available to view by prior arrangement at Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council, Environmental Health Services, Council House, Coton Road, Nuneaton. CV11 5AA
 - ** Free copy available from Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council at the above address.

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