



Our Ref: WM/0524/2002
Enquiries: Labour Relations Adviser
Review Date: January 2014

CIRCULAR TO DEPARTMENTS AND AUTHORITIES NO. 1 OF 2012

REVISED EYESIGHT SCREENING AND TESTING POLICY

The eyesight screening and testing policy has been reviewed and updated.

The government remains committed to support employees in the workplace who work with Screen Based Equipment and on that basis has approved the policy, and the subsidy contained within, to continue to be available as an employment benefit for all eligible public sector employees.

The policy has incorporated some minor amendments designed to modernise the policy and improve management of the subsidy across the sector.

The most significant amendment is that the subsidy is now up to a maximum of \$220 every two years in place of a maximum of \$110 per annum as previously applied. It is provided on a biennial basis in line with the Medicare bulk billing of standard eye testing every two years. This change will ensure employees are not paying for their eye testing every second year out of their own pocket in order to be eligible to claim the subsidy.

The policy has public sector wide application. Should you have any questions on the policy or the review, please contact your agency's labour relations adviser.

This Circular replaces Circular 15 of 2002.

For information on Prescription Safety Glasses please refer to *Circular to Departments and Authorities 3 of 2010 – Prescription Safety Glasses Amended*.

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
LABOUR RELATIONS

1 February 2012

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EYESIGHT SCREENING AND TESTING

POLICY OBJECTIVE

- To provide support to public sector employees who are required to work regularly on screen-based equipment.

POLICY PRINCIPLES

- Occupational Safety and Health legislation places a responsibility on employers and others at the workplace to provide and maintain a safe and healthy work environment.
- Employees with certification that optical aids are necessary for the performance of work on screen-based equipment are entitled to a subsidy.

APPLICATION

- This policy applies to all public sector agencies.

GUIDELINES

1. This Policy Statement is to be read in conjunction with:
 - a. the *Occupational Safety and Health Act 1984* (the OSH Act); and
 - b. the Technical Report of the Study Group On Eyesight Testing of Users of Screen-based Equipment (NOHSC:10004). A copy of the Report can be found at www.nohsc.gov.au.
2. The OSH Act requires that, as far as practicable, employers are to provide a work environment in which employees are not exposed to hazards. Agencies have a general duty of care towards employees who use any form of technology that may or may not present safety or health risks.
3. Agencies will assess any such risks to employees who use screen-based equipment (SBE) in the workplace.
4. Where there is any inconsistency between this policy and the provisions of the OSH Act the latter will prevail.
5. The National Occupational Health and Safety Commission has published NOHSC: 10004, which provides a set of standards in relation to work involving SBE. Where there is any inconsistency between this policy and the provisions of NOHSC: 10004, this policy will prevail.

Eyesight Testing of Employees

6. Eyesight testing will be conducted on a voluntary basis.

7. New employees who are required to operate SBE for in excess of one hour per day continuously or more than ten hours per week are to be encouraged to undergo an initial eyesight screening test.
8. Existing employees who are required to operate SBE for in excess of one hour per day continuously or more than ten hours per week are to be encouraged to have their eyesight tested on a regular basis.
9. The national standard, NOHSC:10004, recommends that eyesight tests should be carried out:
 - a. at pre-commencement on using SBE;
 - b. every two years over the age of 40 years; and
 - c. whenever symptoms indicate that a problem may exist.
10. Employees who use SBE and experience headaches or eyestrain are to be encouraged to undergo eyesight testing, regardless of age or when the last eyesight testing was done.
11. The minimum set of tests required for determining whether optical aids to perform SBE work are required are:
 - a. distance optical acuity;
 - b. near optical acuity;
 - c. oculomotor co-ordination; and
 - d. colour vision.
12. Tests must be performed by optometrists or other appropriately qualified persons. Where employees fail any of the standard screening tests, excluding colour vision, employees should undergo a full vision examination with a qualified optometrist or ophthalmologist to establish if the vision problem requires correction.
13. If optical aids are necessary for the performance of SBE work, optometrists or other appropriately qualified persons should provide employees with a prescription for the corrective optical aids, together with a certificate stating that the optical aids are required for performance of SBE work.

Cost of Eyesight Screening and Testing

14. Agencies shall accept responsibility for the partial cost of any corrective optical aids prescribed as a result of eyesight screening and testing in relation to the use of SBE.
15. Section 19 of the *Health Insurance Act 1973* [Cth] does not allow Medicare benefits to be paid to persons in respect of medical professional services paid for by employers. This precludes the payment of medical benefits for employer initiated eyesight testing programs.

Eligibility Requirements for a Subsidy for Corrective Optical Aids

16. Employees with certification that optical aids are necessary for the performance of SBE work are entitled to a subsidy of 50% of actual out-of-pocket expenses up to a maximum amount of \$220.00.

17. The subsidy will apply to the difference between the cost of the optical aids and any reimbursement made by a private health insurance fund.
18. Only one subsidy payment will be approved for eligible employees in a 24 month period. More than one receipt for optical aids can form part of the single claim for reimbursement where appropriate. For example an employee may have four receipts for six monthly supply of contact lenses over the 24 month period.

Ineligible employees

19. Employees who are not permanent and have less than 12 months' service are not eligible for the subsidy.

Employment Protection

20. Eyesight testing of itself will not be a reason to refuse employment or career opportunities, or to terminate employment in the WA Public Sector.

REVIEW DATE

- *January 2014*