# Laptop Computer Ergonomic Safety

Using computers at work and at home has become an integral part of the life of many state employees.  An office set up with ergonomic principles in mind can help protect the health and safety of the person who works there.  Unfortunately, ergonomic principles are often defeated or ignored when a laptop is used in an office or in the field.

Laptop users often find themselves working out of home, their car, a client's home or business or a public place.  The benefit of a laptop is that you can work wherever and whenever you need to.  Your body often pays a price for this flexibility however, because field worksites are rarely designed with ergonomics in mind or conducive to sound ergonomic practices.

As a laptop user, you need to become very conscious of the positions of your wrists, arms, back and neck whenever you use your laptop.  As you use your laptop, if you experience any discomfort or pain from these areas of your body, you need to change your body's position.  When you use your laptop, place your laptop and yourself in such a position that your wrists remain neutral while typing, your arms hang or rest comfortably at your sides, sit upright without slouching and adjust the screen to avoid bending your neck down or forward too much.

**Here are some specific suggestions you might try:**

- **When using the laptop at the workstation in the office it should function as the monitor only. The monitor of any computer should be at the eye height at the top of the screen or slightly below for employees with bifocals or progressive lens.**
- **A separate mouse and keyboard are mandatory. This will allow you to get the mouse and keyboard in a proper position (at or very near elbow height) while using the actual laptop in an elevated position for the monitor.**
- **Be sure to place the mouse directly next to the keyboard and on the same surface.**
- **Be sure to consider chair adjustment. The feet should be on a supportive surface (preferably the floor) with the hip slightly higher than the knee. The back height should allow adequate support for the lower back with the lumbar support of the chair approximately at the beltline.**

More importantly, whether you are using a laptop or desktop, take periodic breaks from your work.  Get up and away from the computer.  Walk around and do some stretching exercises.  Give your muscles a chance to relax and recover.  It only takes a minute.

Rev 2/08