Working from Home - Confidentiality and Data Security

COVID-19 has meant that many employees are working from home (WFH). Working away from the office is not without risk, and we must put in place arrangements for home working to ensure staff are working safely, securely and in accordance with your organisation's existing policies.

One of the key areas for consideration is how to protect the employer's confidential information, outside its own premises. Employers and Employees need to be mindful of confidentiality issues that arise when a decision to made to take or do work outside of the workplace.

Employees should be informed that they are responsible for ensuring the security of all information they take outside the employer's premises, and face serious disciplinary action if they do not comply.

Key points for consideration:

- It is important that there is a policy about the protection of confidential information – especially for work taken away from the workplace, check that your standard policy covers WFH

- Using a secure internet connection

- Saving data only on the network, and not personal devices

- Not sending sensitive organisational data to personal email or cloud accounts

- Employer/employee responsibilities with respect to managing confidential information (including password access on electronic devices such as iphones, ipads and laptops)

- The required levels of security of the confidential information e.g. can I lock up a room, or drawer that contains my confidential materials? Is my screen and notebooks not on display to others?

- When taking confidential calls or discussing sensitive information, ensure you are in a private room and can't be overheard

- Not permitting others to access the company's systems, including the personal device that has access to the company's systems

- Be sure to lock your computer when taking a break

- Being aware of phishing attacks, which are a particularly concern now as threat actors are using the coronavirus as part of their attacks

- Contacting your IT and Manager immediately if you think there has been a data breach or incident

- For any Confidentiality or Data Security specifics relevant to your organisation, we suggest speaking with you internal teams

For employers, it is important that there is a policy about the protection of confidential information – especially for work taken away from the workplace. Policy implementation accompanied with training and explaining the importance of confidential information to employees will minimise the risk of the confidential information being misused inappropriately, or confidentiality being breached.

We recommend staff complete a WFH Confidentiality Agreement, to ensure compliancy and that employees understand their obligations. Please see the VACCHO form template in our Templates section.

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