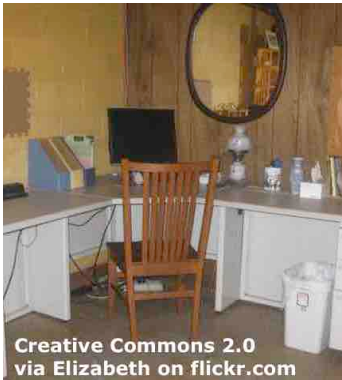


Injuries in home offices are workplace accidents

13th December, 2021



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A German court has ruled that sustaining an injury while walking from your bedroom to your home office constitutes a workplace accident. The judges decided that walking a few metres from your bed to your desk in another room in your house can be considered a commute

to work. As such, any injuries sustained on that short journey can be eligible for compensation payouts. The landmark ruling was made in a case where a man slipped while descending a staircase from his bedroom to his home office and fractured a vertebra. The court decided that the "first morning journey from bed to the home office is an insured work route". This decision could start a rush to get similar cases heard in courts.

The notion of what constitutes a workplace has changed since the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic. Millions of people have switched from working in offices to working at home. This has implications for health and safety issues as well as the legalities around workplace accidents. One big question concerns who is responsible for ensuring a home office satisfies safety requirements, and to what extent an employer is liable for injuries sustained in an employee's home. An expert on German employment law said new legislation would be needed to decide future claims. He told the CNN news agency that: "It seems likely that insurers will...have to revisit this ruling often."

Sources: [washingtonpost.com](https://www.washingtonpost.com) / [cnn.com](https://www.cnn.com) / [independent.com](https://www.independent.com)

Writing

Working from home is better than working in an office. Discuss.

Chat

Talk about these words from the article.

court / injury / bedroom / workplace / accident / commute / compensation / decision / working at home / health / safety / employer / expert / law / employment

True / False

- 1) A German court decided workplace accidents could happen at home. T / F
- 2) Judges said a walk of a few metres constitutes a commute. T / F
- 3) The decision was about a man who fell downstairs. T / F
- 4) This decision will not lead to similar cases being heard. T / F
- 5) The article says billions of people are now working at home. T / F
- 6) The article says the worker is responsible for workplace safety. T / F
- 7) A legal expert said more legislation would be needed. T / F
- 8) The legal expert suggested insurers might be busy looking at legislation. T / F

Synonym Match

(The words in **bold** are from the news article.)

- | | |
|------------------------|-----------------|
| 1. ruled | a. consequences |
| 2. constitutes | b. going down |
| 3. commute | c. probable |
| 4. descending | d. represents |
| 5. rush | e. guaranteeing |
| 6. notion | f. hurry |
| 7. implications | g. decided |
| 8. ensuring | h. specialist |
| 9. expert | i. come and go |
| 10. likely | j. idea |

Discussion – Student A

- a) What do you think about what you read?
- b) What are the advantages of working from home?
- c) What constitutes a workplace?
- d) Has the coronavirus pandemic changed the way you work?
- e) Who is responsible for health and safety in a home office?
- f) Do you think more people will claim home office injuries?
- g) How can we avoid workplace injuries?
- h) What questions would you like to ask the company in this article?

Phrase Match

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. sustaining an injury while | a. for health and safety |
| 2. any injuries | b. cases heard in courts |
| 3. The landmark ruling | c. employment law |
| 4. fractured a | d. liable for injuries |
| 5. a rush to get similar | e. was made |
| 6. The notion of what constitutes | f. sustained |
| 7. implications | g. walking from your bedroom |
| 8. to what extent an employer is | h. this ruling often |
| 9. An expert on German | i. vertebra |
| 10. insurers will have to revisit | j. a workplace |

Discussion – Student B

- Do you like working from home?
- What are the disadvantages of working from home?
- Would you rather work at home or go into the office?
- Who is responsible for injuries at home while working?
- Should companies provide desks for workers' homes?
- Is commuting to work a waste of time?
- Should companies be liable for workplace accidents in the home?
- What accidents have you had at home?

Spelling

- itnussngia an injury while walking
- cnteisttuso a workplace accident
- be considered a cmemuot to work
- be lgieblei for compensation payouts
- slipped while sdngdeieinc a staircase
- cetrfduar a vertebra
- the coronavirus apnidmec
- imilcatonspi for health and safety issues
- the lteasliige around workplace accidents
- an employer is ibalel for injuries
- new tioeglanlsi would be needed
- rsiuersn will have to revisit this

Answers – Synonym Match

1. g	2. d	3. i	4. b	5. f
6. j	7. a	8. e	9. h	10. c

Role Play

Role A – Walking

You think walking is the best way to commute to work. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their ways. Also, tell the others which is the worst of these (and why): subway, bicycle or e-scooter.

Role B – Subway

You think subway is the best way to commute to work. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their ways. Also, tell the others which is the worst of these (and why): walking, bicycle or e-scooter.

Role C – Bicycle

You think bicycle is the best way to commute to work. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their ways. Also, tell the others which is the worst of these (and why): subway, walking or e-scooter.

Role D – E-scooter

You think e-scooter is the best way to commute to work. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their ways. Also, tell the others which is the worst of these (and why): subway, bicycle or walking.

Speaking – Commuting

Rank these with your partner. Put the best ways to commute to work at the top. Change partners often and share your rankings.

- | | |
|-------------|----------|
| • Walk | • Bus |
| • Bicycle | • Subway |
| • Train | • Boat |
| • E-scooter | • Car |

Answers – True False

1 T	2 T	3 T	4 F	5 F	6 F	7 T	8 T
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Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.