

OFFICE SAFETY

Environmental Health and Safety



When you think of workplace hazards, you might think of a worker in a manufacturing plant surrounded by large machines and heavy equipment, and all of their associated hazards. It is often thought that workplace hazards automatically disappear at the office door. Unfortunately, this is not true. It is not unusual to hear of an office employee tripping over a computer cord or straining his/her back while moving a piece of office furniture.

An office setting has its share of safety hazards. What can be done? This brochure will provide details on how to be safe in an office setting.



ELECTRICAL SAFETY

- » Never overload outlets or strip plugs
- » Do NOT daisy chain strip plugs
- » Do NOT run extension cords across pathways, under carpets or above ceilings
- » Do NOT use damaged cords

Clutter in the workplace often creates more than an eyesore; it can get in the way of safety. Stacks of paper, boxes, trash and other items that collect throughout the work area can be fire hazards and can even block safe exits.

PROPER LIFTING AND HANDLING OF OBJECTS

- » Lift with the legs — NOT the back.
- » Do not twist the back while lifting or holding a load. Turn the body by moving the feet.
- » Use a mechanical lifting device, if possible.
- » Do NOT attempt to lift a load beyond one's capability. Get help when necessary, to lift it safely.
- » Before lifting objects, observe them closely for sharp staples, strapping, bonding and/or rough edges that could puncture the hand or body.
- » Use gloves when necessary to protect hands.

OFFICE MACHINES WITH MOVING PARTS

- » Office machines should be guarded to prevent accidental contact with moving parts.
- » When the paper cutter is not in use, the blade should be secured in the down position.
- » Guards should not be removed from a hand operated paper cutter.

LAYOUT / STAIRWAYS

- » Office furnishings should be arranged in a manner that provides unobstructed, safe movement.
- » Stairways should be kept clear of obstructions that cause tripping and falling accidents.
- » Handrails should be installed on both sides of stairways.

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- » Steps and carpeting should be maintained in a safe condition.
- » Do not run up or down steps, and to use handrails when ascending or descending.
- » When ascending or descending stairs, loads that obstruct vision should not be carried.
- » Fire exit doors from stairways should not be locked to prevent employees from exiting.



WASTE BASKET / CONTAINERS AND OTHER OBSTACLES

- » Waste baskets and other obstacles that create tripping hazards should not be placed or left in walkways.
- » Aisle width should conform to the National Fire Protection Association Life Safety Code 101 and should be kept free of obstacles that cause trip, slip and fall type accidents. File drawers should not open into aisles.
- » Hazardous chemicals, materials or objects should not be placed in cabinets unless properly marked.
- » File cabinets that are not weighted at the bottom should be secured to the wall or bolted together to prevent toppling when top drawers are opened.
- » Heavy materials should not be stored/ placed on top of file cabinets. Drawers should not be left open when not in use.

CHAIRS / LADDERS

Chairs should be inspected frequently to insure they are safe. Hazards should be reported to the supervisor for correction.

- » Chairs should be maintained in safe condition.
- » Employees should not lean too far back in chairs.
- » Chairs should not be used for ladders.
- » Employees should exercise care before sitting in a chair to ensure it is properly placed. (Rolling chairs cause many accidents.)
- » When necessary to reach above extended arm height, approved ladders or step stools should be provided and used.
- » Employees should not use makeshift devices such as a box, desk top, chair, table, etc., as a substitute for an approved ladder or step stool.



FLOORS

- » Floors should be maintained in a good state of repair. Difference in floor levels that create a fall hazard should be eliminated or marked to call attention to the hazard.
- » On hard surface floors, nonskid wax should be used.
- » Open-sided floors of upper levels should be equipped with guard rails to prevent falls.
- » Carpet, rugs and mats should be kept in good state of repair: i.e., free of wrinkles, holes, loose edges and other tripping hazards.
- » Floor mats, throw rugs, etc., that could slip on hard floors should not be used unless secured to the floor to prevent slipping.

FIRE EXTINGUISHERS

Fire Extinguisher(s) of the right type for the building and contents should be readily available to the occupants within the office. All employees should be trained in their use.



KEY POINTS TO REMEMBER

Accidents and injuries that occur in an office environment typically are associated with the following types of workplace situations:

- » **Slipping, tripping and falling.**
- » **Improper lifting and handling (of equipment, materials, supplies and other objects.**
- » **Being unobservant, inattentive or unaware of surroundings.**
- » **Caught on, in or between stationary or moving objects.**
- » **Struck by or struck against an object.**
- » **Improper layout or arrangement of furniture, equipment, materials and supplies.**

EXITS / STORAGE

Exit doors and the way to exit doors should be clearly identified, kept free of objects that block egress and not locked from the inside.

Plan for fire or bomb evacuations. Leave the building when the fire alarm goes off and meet in a predesignated location for an accurate head count. Do not go back into the building until the police or fire department give the all clear.

If extra heavy materials (safes, machines, etc.) are stored in offices on balconies/subfloors, etc., weight limits should be determined and maximum weight limit signs should be posted prior to storage to prevent overloading.

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