



Office Safety

In the fast-paced and sometimes high-stress environment of a busy office, workers sometimes forget about their most important workplace responsibility: their safety. They overlook safety issues because they just don't believe an office has any hazards; yet, nearly 40,000 office workers suffer disabling injuries each year. This stresses the importance of office safety and how a good safety attitude and using good judgment are the real keys to injury prevention. Including the safe work practices employees must follow to avoid office injuries.

WHY OFFICE SAFETY IS IMPORTANT

- Office work is an essential part of every operation. In the fast-paced and sometimes high-stress environment of a busy office, workers sometimes forget to think about their most important workplace responsibility: their safety.
- Office workers often overlook safety issues because they just don't believe an office has any hazards; yet, nearly 40,000 office workers suffer disabling injuries each year.

MAINTAINING A GOOD ATTITUDE TOWARD SAFETY

- Most injuries occur when employees perform some type of unsafe act—running, standing in chairs, traveling with a blocked view— the list is endless.
- The real cause of these types of injuries is a poor safety decision made by a well-intentioned worker.
- Most injuries that occur in offices can be prevented simply by using good judgment and common sense.
- If you see a potential safety problem, correct it yourself if you are able or report it to someone who can correct it. If the hazard can't be corrected immediately, mark the hazard in some way so others are aware of the danger.

GOOD HOUSEKEEPING PRACTICES

- Having a good safety attitude includes a commitment to following good housekeeping practices. Proper housekeeping is a crucial element to safety in any setting and the office is certainly no exception.
- A messy work area also tends to expand, often leaving papers and other items behind and under desks creating a fire hazard.
- To help prevent fires, never let combustible items accumulate near heat sources such as power strips, computers, or space heaters.
- Good housekeeping means stairways, doorways and exits are clear of supplies, boxes, or anything else that could block passage. Blocked exits can cause major problems, especially during emergencies.



CONTROLLING SLIP & TRIP HAZARDS

- Perhaps the biggest safety hazard related to poor housekeeping is the risk of slips, trips and falls. Falls are the most common cause of injury to office workers.
- Don't allow boxes, cords, papers or any other item to be stored, even temporarily, in an aisle, walkway or stairway.
- Always close file cabinet and desk drawers immediately after use. Open drawers are notorious tripping hazards in the office.
- Wet floors are a major hazard and should be cleaned up as soon as possible.
- Avoid stretching cords, cables, or similar items across aisle ways if possible. If this is unavoidable, be sure to secure them and mark the hazard with some type of caution sign.

LOOKING OUT FOR FALL HAZARDS WHILE TRAVELING

- When walking scan ahead, along your path of travel and stay alert.
- This is especially important in parking lots, on sidewalks and in parking garages. Watch for potholes, curbs, loose gravel, and ice during the winter months.
- During inclement weather, make sure to wipe rain or ice off your feet when entering the building.
- During bad weather, expect water to be on the floor in entrance ways and plan to enter with caution.
- Also, always assume a bathroom floor is going to be wet and slippery.
- Failing to slow down and be prepared for wet floors around entranceways and bathrooms can lead to a nasty fall.
- When carrying objects through the office, make sure your forward vision is not obstructed. This is especially critical when traveling on stairs; a blocked view makes a fall much more likely.

PREVENTING FALLS FROM CHAIRS

- Most falls in office environments involve walking or running, so use caution at all times; however, a surprising number of fall injuries occur when workers fall out of their chairs while seated.
- Some chair tip-overs occur when chairs have loose, damaged or missing parts. This is why it's important to periodically inspect chairs for defects and loose parts.
- Excessive bending and reaching while seated may cause a chair to kick out from under you, leading to a fall.
- The all-time leading cause of chair spills is leaning back in a chair; leaning back in a chair beyond its tipping point is just asking for trouble.



- Never, ever use a chair as a ladder or stepstool; always use a stepladder or an approved step stool. Standing on chairs leads to many injuries each year.

USING PROPER LIFTING TECHNIQUES TO AVOID BACK INJURIES

- Some of the most common injuries among all workers are back injuries and office workers are no exception.
- When lifting, take a balanced stance about shoulder-width apart. Get close to the object and bend at the knees to reach it. Do not bend over at the waist.
- Keep your back in its natural posture which is a semi-straight position.
- Lift the object straight up by straightening your legs. Do not use your back to lift the load.
- Keep the load close to your body while carrying it to your destination.
- One of the worst things you can do while lifting is to twist and lift at the same time. Never twist while lifting; this is very bad for your back.

AVOIDING REPETITIVE STRAIN INJURIES

- Office workers are frequently at their workstations for long periods of time each day. Proper posture and workstation setup are critical to avoid the neck, back, shoulder and wrist pains known as repetitive strain injury.
- Repetitive strain injuries usually occur when a person's body is incorrectly positioned at the workstation by improper posture or by poor ergonomics.
- You can alleviate these types of problems by keeping your body in neutral positions and by adjusting your workstation to personally fit you.
- Keep the telephone, reference materials and other frequently used items within reach to prevent overstretching, which can cause muscle strain and back pain.
- To alleviate neck and shoulder pain, avoid cradling the telephone receiver between your head and shoulder, especially at long intervals.

FILE CABINET HAZARDS

- Office workers also need to be aware that certain furnishings and equipment can cause injury if proper precautions are not followed. For example, filing cabinets look innocent enough, but they are involved in countless injury scenarios each year.
- File cabinets are heavy, especially when overloaded, and when they become top-heavy, they can easily tip over, crushing whoever is in their path.



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- To keep them from tipping over, filing cabinets should be loaded from the bottom up and should never be overloaded.
- Even a properly loaded file cabinet can become unstable if multiple drawers are opened at once. Always fully close one drawer before opening another.

EMERGENCY RESPONSE PROCEDURES

- Understanding how to respond to an emergency is an important safety concern for office workers. To be prepared for emergencies, you should know and understand your organization's emergency response plan.
- Make sure you understand where you should go once an evacuation has occurred. Many companies have assigned evacuation meeting points a safe distance from the building.
- Never use an elevator in the event of a fire. If you must exit from a higher level, use the stairs.