

Office Safety Checklist

Practice Good Housekeeping—
A key aspect of office safety is proper handling and storage of materials and supplies.

Control Hazardous Materials—
Each employee should be made aware of all hazardous materials they might contact in their work area. Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS) should be provided for each hazardous substance used.

Prevent Back Injury—Safe
lifting includes knowing your limitations, getting help if an item is too heavy, lifting with the legs instead of the back, keeping items close and not twisting when lifting and lowering.

Prevent Slips, Trips and Falls—
Arrange or cover wiring to eliminate the possibility of trips and falls. Traffic areas should be clear. Make sure spills are cleaned up quickly.

Keep File Cabinets Orderly—
Distribute cabinet contents evenly to prevent tipping. Drawers should be closed immediately to prevent strike injuries.

Keep From Getting Zapped—
Proper use of electrical outlets and cords will greatly reduce the possibility of fire or shock.

Have An Emergency Action Plan—
A plan can include evacuation routes, meeting areas and employee accounting procedure; notification of emergency services; personal injury and property damage response; and protection of company information, both hard copy and electronic media.

There's a right way and a wrong way to do everything. Make sure you're doing everything the right way.

Risk Services Notes

Office Safety

How many times have you looked at a window washer suspended from the side of a multi-story building and thought "I'm glad that's not me! I like working with my feet on the floor in a safe office." We frequently forget that accidents can happen in an office too.

Every year, hundreds of workers are injured by slips, trips, falls, collisions, equipment failures and furniture accidents. If you think you are completely safe, you'll be surprised to learn what can really happen in an office.

Danger lurks in every corner of your office! There are the obvious dangers of loose carpets, temporary extension cords laid across traffic areas, and open filing cabinet drawers.

But what about the less obvious dangers? That hot laminating machine used for making employee I.D. badges could burn an unfamiliar user. The telephone message spike, set in the middle of your desk, could puncture your hand. What about the recycling box? Is it overflowing with paper? Is it close to the electric baseboard or near flammable liquids like photocopier inks and solvents? Are the electrical cords for printers, fax machines and computers worn or frayed? These are all possible fire hazards.

Electrical problems in offices can include extension cords. They can create a trip-and-fall hazard and may also overload circuits. Overloading can lead to shorts, outages and fires. Often someone will go out and buy an extension cord that is not sufficiently rated for the job, creating these electrical hazards. Before you buy or use extension cords, find out about your office policy. If extension cords are permitted, you should check with the maintenance department to find out what cords are required. Then put in a work request to add outlets so extension cords can be eliminated.

Safety at work is everyone's responsibility. Always be aware of potential hazards around you and take corrective action to eliminate them:

- Report any defective chairs to the maintenance department. Make sure the chair is tagged and taken out of service. And as far as office chairs go, if it has wheels under it, it should have at least five legs for better stability.
- Report loose carpeting or floor tiles to prevent tripping accidents.

- Remove office clutter such as boxes of old files. Clean up spills and trash. Re-route electrical cords away from traffic areas.

- Replace makeshift scaffolds such as boxes stacked on chairs with proper step-ladders and step-stools.

Back problems are a common cause of lost time from the job for office workers. Follow these suggestions for fewer back injuries:

- Don't lift a load you cannot handle. Plan your lift carefully so that your leg muscles handle most of the load, rather than your back.
- Don't twist your body when lifting even a light load. Keep your back straight and your footing secure.

Office furniture can be another source of injury:

- Open filing cabinets just one drawer at a time. If you open more than that, you risk the cabinet falling over onto you. Load filing cabinet drawers evenly, starting with the bottom ones first.
- Anchor shelves securely and do not overload them. Do not place heavy objects on overhead shelves.
- Never make unauthorized or makeshift repairs. Report problems so they can be fixed.

One last caution: be aware of "office entanglements." We're talking about the hazards of jewelry and loose clothing around equipment. They can become entangled in the moving parts of equipment. This equipment can include typewriters, computer printers, paper shredders and postage meters.

Each year a great number of workers receive disabling injuries from office accidents. Many of those injuries could have been prevented. So the next time you notice one of the risks that we have spoken about today, remember, it is important we all work together to eliminate office hazards. Report it, remove it or replace it! Please post the attached poster in your office. Have a safe day!



Empty the trash, sweep the floor, make housekeeping a "Safety Chore."