An injury-free office

An injury-free office helps your workplace run smoothly. Some hazards are typical of offices everywhere.

Here are some common concerns for office workers:

- Poor lighting
- Poor ventilation and indoor air quality
- Ergonomics
- Slips, trips and falls
- Electrical hazards
- Collisions with objects such as open file cabinet drawers

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 that extension cords can be eliminated.

Surprisingly, the most dangerous part of office work can be the possibility of falls. Standing on a chair to reach something on a shelf or bending down while seated in an unstable chair are two causes.

Be aware of potential slip and trip hazards. Make sure aisles have clear passage, drawers on file cabinets are closed and spills are immediately cleaned up.

Indoor air quality problems in offices are common. Ventilation may be poor if air handling systems are poorly maintained or not operating correctly. Some people will be bothered by poor ventilation almost immediately. Others may take some time to feel effects, and still other workers may never be affected.

If you have problems in your office with air quality, speak with your supervisor and report the problems. Get a check-up with your doctor when needed. Find out if the heating, ventilation and air conditioning systems are routinely checked and filters are changed regularly.

Poor lighting can lead to eye strain, poor posture and musculoskeletal or ergonomic injuries. Make sure that the lighting is adequate for the work you are doing. Change the position of your desk or computer if there is too much glare.

However, poorly designed workstations and inadequate lighting can both lead to poor posture and muscle strain. You need adequate lighting and good office desk setup to stay healthy. Don’t trade one for the other.

If your job is in the office, take pride in your role. And take care for your safety.