

Hazards in the Office

What's at Stake?

Every year thousands of workers are injured, and some are killed, "at the office." Broken bones and head injuries from falls, burns, and electrical shock hurt just as badly when they occur in an office setting as when they happen at an industrial site.

What's the Danger?

Office hazards cover the spectrum of workplace hazards common in most other workplace settings. For example, the leading causes of office injuries are slipping, tripping, and falling. Sound familiar? Falls are also a big cause of incidents in industrial, construction, manufacturing, and many other jobsites. Other hazards include, fire, chemicals, materials handling and ergonomics, falling objects and personal safety.

How to Protect Yourself

Fall Prevention

- Keep the office free from clutter.
- Boxes should be stacked out of the way of traffic.
- Trash and spills should be cleaned up from the floor.
- Re-route electrical cords away from traffic areas.
- Remove any defective chairs or office equipment from service.
- Close drawers so nobody will trip over them; and
- Don't use makeshift climbing equipment such as boxes stacked on chairs or your desk to reach high-up items. Instead, use a stepladder or stepstool and get help if you need it.

Fire Prevention

- Make sure you know where to find emergency numbers, first aid contacts, and evacuation procedures for your office. If

you don't, ask your supervisor for help. Your employer must have this information posted where everyone can see it and must train employees on emergency procedures.

- Know where the fire extinguishers are located. If you are expected to use a fire extinguisher to fight small fires in their beginning stage, your employer must provide hands-on training on how to use an extinguisher to put out a fire.
- Don't overload electrical circuits by "daisy-chaining" power strips together, or overloading outlets by using adapters to plug in multiple items.

Chemical Safety

- Know the chemicals you work with or those used nearby. A tour of your office could reveal a surprising number of hazardous materials such as cleaning fluids, art supplies and solvents.
- If hazardous chemicals are present or you work with them, you must be trained on their safe use, including how to read a safety data sheet and where they are located.

Safe Lifting

- Whenever possible use materials handling equipment such as carts to avoid lifting and moving heavy objects.
- Get help moving heavy and/or hard to comfortably and securely hold objects.

Ergonomics

- Adjust your workstation so you can work comfortably and avoid strain to your neck, back, shoulders, wrists and other areas vulnerable to injury from repetitive work and static posture.
- Talk to your manager or safety contact if you are experiencing ergonomic issues – the sooner the better!

Falling Objects

- Filing cabinets can cause serious injury. Open 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.

- Make sure shelves are securely anchored, and do not overload them. Do not place heavy objects on overhead shelves

Personal Safety

- Get familiar with your company's antiviolenence policies.
- Observe rules about lockup, escorts to parking areas, visitor badges and other security procedures

Final Word

Just because you work in an office environment doesn't mean you are immune to hazards. One mishap or error can lead to an injury that could result in a lot of grief