The Environment and Your Health and Safety

Safety Talk

Every day we hear about environmental concerns including the diminishing ozone layer, overflowing landfills, pollution … the list is endless. The problems seem so immense, yet what can one person do? The short answer is, plenty!

What's at Stake:

There is a link between protecting the environment and protecting your own well-being and safety. What is good for the natural environment is usually good for you too.

That is one of the reasons why safeguarding the environment is part of your job responsibility.

In an office, this means using a minimal amount of resources such as paper and electrical energy. At a jobsite, this can mean safely disposing of hazardous substances, and reusing and recycling certain materials.

What Can Go Wrong

A company was dumping excess chemicals into a waste pond. The pond infiltrated the plumbing of a nearby town. Members of the community became poisoned by their drinking water and many began showing symptoms of illness. The company was not caught until years later, by which point, for many victims, it was too late to save their lives.

How to Protect Yourself

- Use carpools and public transportation when feasible. Purchase fuel-efficient vehicles and keep them well

maintained so they will consume less fuel and emit the least possible pollution. Riding a bicycle or walking to work is a terrific solution that benefits both the environment and your own health.

- Support efforts to use less paper. You probably don’t have to print as many documents as you do. Put used paper in the recycling bin. Confidential materials can be shredded prior to recycling. Be sure to follow company procedures.
- Other materials can be recycled as well. Old office furniture and equipment can be sold or donated to charities rather than sent to a landfill. Batteries and printer cartridges are examples of the different kinds of materials which can be saved for pick-up by a recycling business or agency.
- Do your part to recycle lunchroom trash by separating it into the correct trash and recycling containers.
- Encourage the use of less hazardous substances where possible. For instance, certain cleaning products may be less harmful to the environment—and less hazardous to you.
- Encourage safer disposal practices for hazardous substances. For example, leftover paint should never be tossed into the trash, and liquids such as solvents should never be poured down a drain. They should go to the proper facility for reuse or safe disposal.
- Familiarize yourself with your company’s environmental policies and find out what your personal responsibilities are. Not only are companies liable for environmental damage, but individuals may also be.

Final Word

Keep your personal safety in mind when you are involved in recycling and other environmental care projects. Use care and follow directions when operating a paper shredder. Wear gloves when handling recyclables such as glass. Do not allow paper or other recyclables to accumulate and create obstacles which can cause tripping incidents or provide fuel for fires.