The Environmental Safety Connection

WHAT'S AT STAKE?

Every day we hear about environmental concerns. The diminishing ozone layer, overflowing landfills, pollution … the list is endless. The problems seem so immense that we ask ourselves what one person can do.

WHAT'S THE DANGER?

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 safeguarding the environment is part of your job responsibility.

Employees are expected to be environmentally responsible and to perform their duties in a manner which will protect the natural environment.

EXAMPLE

Exactly what this means varies a great deal from one type of workplace to the next. In an office, it can mean using a minimum amount of resources such as paper and electrical energy. It can also mean safely disposing of hazardous substances, and reusing and recycling certain materials.

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

- When you are travelling, (even to and from work), make sure you practice fuel efficiency and try to reduce the auto

emissions which pollute the air. Drive steadily, and do not speed. Avoid fast starts and stops. Use carpools and public transportation where it is feasible. Encourage the use of fuel-efficient, well-maintained vehicles in your workplace.

- Support efforts to use less paper. You probably don’t have to print as many documents as you do. Put 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 the 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 stockpile and create obstacles which can cause tripping incidents or fuel for fires.