

Before you begin:

Before you begin: Review your organization's injury records for the past five years, looking for office-related accidents. Survey the office space at your facility to identify areas with potential for these hazards.



Introduction

When we think of workplace injuries, office areas are often overlooked as a place where injuries can occur. A variety of hazardous conditions and workstation arrangements may contribute to or lead to injuries. Consequently, it is important to review the factors that may cause employee injuries and implement proactive prevention measures to reduce or eliminate hazards. Always remember that the cost of an injury outweighs the cost to eliminate safety hazards in the workplace.

Definitions

Hazard: a source or a situation with the potential for harm in terms of human injury illness, property damage, environmental damage, or a combination of these.

Discussion

Ask the group:

What types of accidents may occur on your company's property? See if the group identifies any of the following types of injuries: cuts, burns, sprains and strains, electric shock, allergic reactions/first aid, and/or bruises.

What injuries/illnesses occur in the workplace? See if the group identifies any of the following injury causes: struck by/striking against, emergency response, intruders, severe weather, heat sources, electricity, heavy objects, sharp tools or slips, trips, and falls.

Next to each item on your list, ask for their ideas on scenarios, conditions or workplace arrangements that may contribute to or increase injury risk.

Slips, Trips, Falls:

- When icy/snow conditions exist wear appropriate footwear when entering and exiting the office. (Tip: walk like a penguin when conditions are icy!)
- Always use a ladder or step stool instead of a chair to reach heights.
- Slippery or wet floors
 - Place wet floor signs indicating slippery, mopped surfaces, or wet floors.
 - Wipe up spilled liquids when they occur.
 - Clean up leaks and submit maintenance requests to have leaking fixtures repaired.
- Fix or replace rug or floor matting with curled edges.
- Clean up loose paper and debris on the floors.
- Store items properly to avoid tripping on items such as crates, books, boxes, etc.
- Keep wiring and cords up off the floor.

Be aware of your surroundings and avoid using your phone or other distractions when walking.

Cuts

- Use ceramic cutters or safety knives, do not use scissors improperly, and dispose of dull knives and scissors.
- Repair sharp edges or surfaces.

Burns

- To prevent burns from hot liquid, food, and drink spills, use sturdy spill-resistant cups and do not overfill cups.
- Use potholders or tongs to remove hot foods from toasters or toaster ovens and unplug them prior to removing items that are stuck.

Electric Hazards

- Do not use electrical equipment/appliances that have damaged electrical cords or missing ground pins. Plug power strips directly into wall outlets and do not overload with microwave, space heater, toaster, or refrigerator.
- Extension cords cannot be run through walls, doors, or ceilings. They cannot be used as a permanent power supply.
- Ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCI) are required in kitchens, bathrooms, and within six feet of water sources.
- If space heaters are allowed, ensure they are plugged directly into the wall, that they have a tip over control, and they are unplugged nightly.

Allergic Reaction and First Aid Response

- Allergens that may require First Aid Response are bee, hornet, wasp stings, lotions, soaps, cleaning agents, plants growing in, on or around the building, and latex gloves.
- Identify sharps containers if available.
- Identify persons certified in first aid, CPR, Blood Borne Pathogens, and automated external defibrillator (AED).
- Discuss location and content of emergency kits and AED.
- Keep first aid supplies stocked and checked monthly for expiration dates.

Emergency Response/Intruders/ Severe Weather

- Exit signs are not to be blocked and are to be always visible at or above the line of sight.
- Emergency exits may not be blocked or locked.
- Fire extinguishers must have three feet of clearance around them, ensure that the pin is in place and the pressure gauge's needle is in the green.

Conclusion

Although safety in the office is often overlooked, there are many hazards that need to be addressed. Setting up a time for individuals to conduct regular inspections of their work areas is an important part of maintaining office safety.

Group Activity

Work with your group to develop a checklist of hazards they should be looking for in their workplace. Once the checklist is complete, set up times for staff to conduct walk throughs of their work areas at least monthly.

Resources

[Power Strips and OSHA](#)

[NSC Safety + Health – Recognizing Hidden Dangers: 25 Steps to a safer office](#)

[Electrical - Flexible Cords | Occupational Safety and Health Administration \(osha.gov\)](#)

[Electricalhazards.pdf \(osha.gov\)](#)



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