

# Toolbox Talks

## Office Safety

An office may appear to be a safe work environment. Compared to police, fire, or public works it is, but an office has many potential hazards. These hazards are controllable or can be eliminated. Many office accidents happen when people set the stage for injury by rushing, not keeping things in their proper place and simply put - by doing things that are just plain dumb!

### Here are ways to prevent office accidents and injuries:

#### Slip, Trips, and Falls

- Eliminate tripping hazards. Use handrails on stairs and never place or store items on stairs. Use caution when walking on wet floors or uneven surfaces.
- Practice “electric cord management”. Loosely coil excess wires and cords, tie, and place away from the travel path. Do not leave wires under a desk where they can become tangled in the chair or become a trip hazard.
- **Never** stand on a table, counter, boxes, or a chair on wheels when reaching for items. Purchase a sturdy stool or stepladder for this purpose.
- Carpet and floor mats should be in good condition.
- Wear footwear appropriate for the weather conditions. Use travel paths that are clear of snow and sanded.



#### Office Ergonomics

- Place the heaviest items stored on shelves between knee and chest height. This reduces strain on the back and upper extremities when lifting.
- Use carts or get help when lifting and carrying heavy loads. Use proper lifting techniques using your legs. Keep items close to your body when lifting. Avoid overextension.
- At your computer use wrist rests, foot stools, document holders and similar aids when necessary to maintain a neutral posture.
- Adjust position and height of your computer monitor, chair, keyboard, and mouse to avoid strain and fatigue. All desk materials should be easy to reach. Avoid sustained postures and take frequent stretch breaks.



#### General Safety

- Do not place file cabinets where people are liable to walk into open drawers. Never work in a lower drawer with a drawer open above. Close drawers when unattended.
- Do not overload top drawers of a file cabinet. Place heavier items in lower drawers. This, along with opening only one drawer at a time, will prevent the cabinet from tipping over.
- Repair or replace file cabinets with damaged slides or tracks. Keep files loosely packed to prevent hand and wrists injuries.
- Anchor shelving, cabinets or other potentially top-heavy equipment to the wall to prevent tipping.



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- Use caution when sitting in a chair with casters. It can roll out from under you, or if you lean back too far and flip over. Don't rest your feet on the desk. Replace old four-point pedestal (4 legs) chairs with five-point pedestal platforms.

## Housekeeping

- Practice good housekeeping. Put items away after use. Remove trash, boxes, and discarded papers. Do **not** store items in aisles, stairways, or the knee-hole space of desks.
- Limit personal items in your workstation to a few favorites. Limit clutter and maintain the work area in an organized, efficient and safe manner.
- Clean up spills immediately. Employees mopping or waxing floors should place warning signs to alert others of the potential for slippery floors. Broken glass and other sharp objects should not be placed in wastepaper containers.
- Solvents or other toxic substances should be used only with proper personal protection equipment and in well-ventilated areas. Refer to Safety Data Sheets (SDS) to determine what PPE should be used. SDS's should be accessible to all employees who are using these substances.

## Fire Safety / Emergency Plan

- Never run electrical cords under carpeting, through windows or doorways or fasten them to walls or other surfaces with staples or other unapproved fasteners.
- Do not overuse extension cords or multiple power strips. Never plug a power strip into another power strip or extension cord. Do not use three-prong to two-prong adaptors. Misuse of wiring presents both an electrocution hazard and fire hazard.
- When not in use, turn off electrical appliances such as coffee pots, computers, photocopiers, and heaters. Ensure heaters have tip over protection.
- Know where fire extinguishers are located and how to use them. Extinguishers should be inspected monthly to ensure availability and that they will work when needed.
- Never block access to fire extinguishers and emergency exits.
- Make sure that all secondary (emergency) exits are kept clear of snow and ice and that door hardware is maintained in working condition.
- Know of your office emergency procedures in case of a fire, storm, workplace violence, medical problem, or other emergency. Be familiar with evacuation procedures, exit routes, and location of first aid supplies.

