Office Safety Talk



Safety Talk

What's at Stake?

Most offices have few hazardous chemicals and no heavy or moving machinery. If the worst that can happen is a paper cut, why do we need to talk about safety training? Because a paper cut isn't the worst that can happen.

Office employees still need to know what to do in case of an emergency, and accidents are surprisingly common. Also, people who sit down and use computers most of the day need to watch out for ergonomic issues.

What's the Danger?

Common risks in offices include:

- Fire
- Slips, trips, and falls
- Eye-strain and back-strain from long periods of sitting and computer use
- Breathing problems from faulty heating or air conditioning systems
- Burns from office kitchens

How to Protect Yourself

Here's a top ten list for safe offices.

1. **Practice Good Housekeeping**
   Office safety starts with proper handling and storage of materials and supplies. This includes trash removal, destruction of discarded, sensitive company information, and maintaining the premises, including removing ice and snow. Keep office supplies and stationery where they are easily reached, with a step-stool for high-up items.
2. **Prevent Back Injury**
   Bankers boxes and desks can both be heavy! Safe lifting means knowing your limitations, getting help if an item is too heavy, lifting with the legs instead of the back, keeping items close, and not twisting when lifting and lowering.
3. **Prevent Slips, Trips, and Falls**
   Practice safe cord management and keep cords out of walkways. Cover them with appropriate cord cover strips if that's not possible. This includes cords and wires under desks. Keep traffic areas clear of debris and clean up floor spills immediately. Use rugs with a non-slip backing.

4. **Keep File Cabinets Orderly**
   Don’t have drawers from file cabinets opening into high-traffic areas. Distribute cabinet contents evenly to avoid top-heavy cabinets that could tip over. Drawers should be closed immediately to prevent tripping injuries.
5. **Be Prepared for Fire**
   Know where the nearest fire extinguishers, emergency exits, and the escape route are in your work area.
6. **Keep from Getting Zapped**
   Make sure you have approved surge protectors and enough electrical outlets in your work area. Plug power strips directly into wall outlets and not into other power strips or extension cords. Always unplug the equipment before attempting adjustments or repairs.
7. **Maintain Air Quality**
   Air that is too hot or cold, or fouled by cigarette smoke and other pollutants, can cause physical and psychological stress. Air quality problems arise in new energy-efficient buildings as well as older ones.
8. **Be Ergonomically Correct**
   Work-stations should be designed to minimize stress placed on the body. Correct placement of computer screens and keyboards is a particular issue for eyes, necks, backs and wrists. Getting everybody’s work-station right will reduce all the reaching, bending, and repetitive hand-wrist movements that lead to fatigue and musculoskeletal disorders.
9. **Be Ready with First Aid**
   Know the location of first aid kits in your work area and throughout the office. Let your office manager or supervisor know when supplies are low. Know who your first responders are and how to contact them.
10. **Emergency Action Plan**
    Your company should have an emergency action plan that includes: how to get out, where to meet and how to check everyone is safe; who notifies the emergency services; how to deal with any injuries or property damage; and protecting company information. They must hold emergency drills for fire, severe weather, and other potential hazards and natural disasters such as, earthquakes and floods.

Final Word

Office safety may seem like simple common sense. But it’s easy to get sloppy. There’s a right way and a wrong way to do just about everything. Make sure you’re doing everything to ensure yours is the right way.