

Office Safety

General Office Safety

A large percentage of workplace accidents and injuries occur in office buildings. The relative lack of obvious threats does not mean offices should be considered "safe." People can still perform unsafe acts and create unsafe conditions. The following sections address several office safety practices.

Basic Electrical Safety Tips

1. Unplug any equipment before performing maintenance or repair. Unplug defective electronic equipment and have it repaired or replaced as soon as possible. In addition, tag the defective device with a "Do Not Use" Warning sign until it can be repaired or replaced.
2. Use extension cords only temporarily. Have permanent wiring installed if more electrical outlets are needed.
3. Do not overload electrical outlets by using extension devices to increase the number of outlets at the permanent outlet. Do not "daisy-chain" power strips or surge protectors.
4. Do not lay cords or cables across aisles, walkways, or common paths of travel where someone may trip and fall over them. Use the proper cable/cord covers designed for covering cords extending across these areas.

Equipment with Cutting and Puncture Hazards

1. Use care when using this equipment.
 - Paper cutters, letter openers, exacto knives, box knives, utility scrapers, scissors, paper shredders. (Cutting Hazards)
 - Staplers, staple removers, hole-punchers, pens, pencils, thumbtacks, push pins, message spindles. (Puncture Hazards)
2. Use the equipment for its intended purpose, do not improvise.
3. Always use any safety guard on the equipment and keep them in place when the equipment is not in use (i.e. close the cutting arm on a paper cutter and activate the arm-guard).

Safety Tips for Office Furnishings

1. **File Cabinets**

- Do not block ventilation grates with file cabinets.
- Open and close file drawers slowly, one drawer at a time, and use the handle to avoid pinched or crushed fingers. Close drawers when they are not in use.
- Fill the bottom drawer first to stabilize unit. The reverse would be used when removing items.

2. Shelving

- Place heavy objects on the bottom or lowest shelf.
- Do not stack boxes too high.
- Keep at least 18 inches between top shelf items and the ceiling. This space will allow ceiling fire sprinklers, if present, to function properly.
- Never climb on shelves. Use a stepladder.

3. Desks

- Keep desks in good condition (free from protruding screws, loose trim, etc.)
- Do not climb on desks. Use a stepladder.
- Keep drawers closed when not in use.

4. Computer Workstations

Computer workstation set-up is the primary ergonomic consideration in the office, due to the sheer number of office employees using computers.

- Keyboard location and height are two primary considerations. First, adjust desk and/or chair height to a height where your wrists do not bend and use adjustable keyboard trays that move and tilt. Next, position yourself correctly to the keyboard, not too far or too close, but at a comfortable distance.
- Mouse placement should be as close as possible to the side of the keyboard to allow you to use it easily and comfortably without too much arm, hand, wrist, or elbow extension.
- Computer monitor placement should not be too close, too far, too high, or too low. A good distance is about an arm's length away and your eyes should look straight ahead into it. There should be no natural or artificial light reflecting off the screen.

5. Chairs

Change chair adjustments periodically throughout the day to suit your back. You need a chair that fits you.

- The correct height. Your feet should reach the floor or footrest, and your thighs should be horizontal. Armrests should allow your forearms to rest horizontally when at the keyboard.
- The seat. The seat should be slightly concave with a downward-rounded edge. This prevents you from sliding forward and distributes your weight. You may want to tilt the chair slightly forward or backward.
- Back support. Adjust the chair back at an angle and height so that your posture, including the lumbar curve of the lower back is supported. This prevents backaches. The bend at your hips should make a 90° angle.
- Armrests. Armrests should not prevent you from getting close to your work surface.
- Do not lean back in office chairs, particularly swivel chairs with rollers.
- Do not climb on any office chair. Use an approved ladder.