

Safety in the office is critical because accidents do happen in the office. Few office workers realize that they are twice as likely to be injured in a fall as a non-office worker. Nationally, only automobile accidents out-number falls as the leading cause of all accidents. In the office slips, trips and falls are the number one cause of disabling injuries. Thinking and working safely can prevent most accidents.

This checklist details safety-related work practices that should be considered in order to prevent injuries in the office environment. The following safety-related work practices should be observed:

- Offices will be laid out as efficiently as possible
- Work should flow-through the office with a minimum of unnecessary travel
- First aid supplies must be located in a convenient spot and the phone numbers for emergency services must be readily available
- Workstations must be well-lit and the chair, light and/or keyboard area should be adjustable so associates can work comfortably
- All buildings are designated as non-smoking. See our Smoking Policy for more information.
- At least 3 feet distance between desks and at least 50 square feet per associate
- Group associates who use the same machines in the same vicinity of those machines
- All exit access must be at least 28 inches wide
- Generally two exits should be provided
- Exits and access to exits must be marked
- Means of egress, including stairways used for emergency exit, should be free of obstructions and adequately lit
- Associates must be aware of exits and trained in procedures for evacuation.
- Store unused records/papers in fire resistant files or vaults
- Use flame-retardant materials
- Smoke only in designated areas and use proper ashtrays
- Fire extinguishers and alarms should be conspicuously placed and accessible.
- Materials must not be stored in aisles, corners, or passageways.
- Fire equipment should remain unobstructed.
- Flammable and combustible materials must be identified and properly stored.
- Safety Data Sheets must be provided for each hazardous chemical identified.
- Machines should be disconnected before cleaning or adjusting. Machines and equipment must be locked or tagged out during maintenance.
- Don't throw cigarette butts into landscaping or on the ground. Smoke only in designated areas
- Don't eat or drink at a computer station. It could result in malfunction of the computer and void the warranty.
- Watch for unsafe conditions such as defective equipment, burned out lights, loose steps, torn carpet, etc and report them to your supervisor immediately.

Tips for Office Safety

Falls:

- Watch out for slippery surfaces. Spilled drinks or water from umbrellas are typical hazards and need to be cleaned up/or identified immediately.
- Look where you are going. Don't block your view by carrying loads higher than eye level.
- Don't read or text while walking. It doesn't save enough time to justify the risk.
- Walk, do not run. Please slow down.
- Don't climb on chairs, desks or boxes. Use a utility ladder or portable step-stool instead.
- Hold onto handrails when using stairways.
- Use elevators when carrying boxes if they are available.
- Keep the floor and walkway clear of electrical, phone and computer cables, boxes, etc. They are tripping hazards waiting to happen.
- Associates should always face the ladder when climbing up or down
- Ladders should be inspected regularly to ensure they are in good condition
- The top of a ladder should not be used as a step
- Ladders must only be used when they are fully open and the spreaders are locked.
- Regular inspection, repair, and replacement of faulty carpets
- Place mats inside building entrances
- Floors and traffic aisles must be kept free of tripping hazards such as telephone or electric cords, file drawers, boxes and carts
- Carpeting should be repaired or replaced as soon as possible if there are holes, tears or rips
- Follow good housekeeping practice at all times
- Spills around coffee or water dispensers must be cleaned up promptly. Slippery floor and walkway conditions must be corrected immediately.
- Floor waxes (if applicable) must be of the non-skid type
- Associates are encouraged to wear shoes that provide stable footing and should walk, not to run, in the office areas
- Outside walks, parking areas and entrances must be maintained free of ice, holes, obstructions and tripping hazards. Floor mats or runners should be used at entrances
- All areas should be well lighted
- All steps and stairs should be provided with handrails, non-skid treads and adequate lighting. Storage is prohibited on stairs.
- Never use boxes, chairs or other makeshift climbing devices in place of a ladder
- Ladders must be maintained in good repair, and be used and stored properly
- Always use a ladder or step stool to retrieve anything above shoulder level.
- Ladders, or step stools, should be sturdy and not have any broken rungs or legs.
- Do not lean too far back in chairs. This may result in over-balancing and a fall.
- Never use ladder substitutes such as chairs, buckets or boxes.
- Be sure the pathway is clear before you walk.
- Secure electrical cords and wires away from walkways.
- Avoid excessive bending, twisting, and leaning backward while seated.

Filing Cabinets/Bookcases:

- Chairs should be properly designed and regularly inspected for missing casters, shaky legs, and loose parts
- Do not lean back in a chair with your feet on a desk
- Do not scoot across the floor while sitting on a chair
- Never stand on a chair to reach an overhead object
- Open only one file drawer at a time
- Do not locate file cabinets close to doorways or in aisles
- Use drawer handles to close file drawers.
- Machines such as conveyors, electric hole punches, and paper shredders with hazardous moving parts must be guarded so that office workers cannot contact the moving parts.
Fans must have substantial bases and fan blades must be properly guarded.
- Paper cutters - Keep blade closed when not in use. A guard should be provided and fingers should be kept clear
- Staplers - Always use a staple remover. Never test a jammed stapler with your thumb
- Pencils, pens, scissors, etc. - Store sharp objects in a drawer or with the point down. Never hand someone a sharp object point first.
- Copiers...
 - Keep the document cover closed
 - Reduce noise exposure by isolating the machine
 - Place machines in well-ventilated rooms away from workers' desks
 - Have machines serviced routinely to prevent chemical emissions
 - Avoid skin contact with photocopying chemicals
 - Clean all spills and dispose of waste properly.
- Don't lean back in your chair. Keep all legs on the floor so that you do not end up on the floor. Take time to reach out and hold on to the chair as you sit down. Be sure that the chair is beneath you as you sit.
- Close one drawer in a filing cabinet before opening another. This prevents the file cabinet from tipping over on you.
- Close the drawer in your desk before getting up and close file drawers before walking away from the file cabinet. This prevents the danger of people walking into an open file drawer or desk drawer.
- Store supplies inside cabinets, not on top of them. Store heavy items in lower drawers or on low shelves.
- Avoid the use of poorly maintained or non-approved equipment
- Materials should not be stored on top of cabinets.
- Heavy objects should be stored on lower shelves and materials stacked neatly.
- Materials should be stored inside cabinets, files, or lockers whenever possible.
- Office machines should be kept away from edges of desks and tables
- Workstations must be secure and machines (printers, faxes, etc.) protected from falling from tables or desks

- Filing cabinets and other heavy equipment must be placed against walls or columns and secured to the floor or wall, if necessary. Filing cabinets should be positioned so that drawers do not open into aisleways
- Plate glass walls must be obviously marked so that people won't walk into them
- Associates must immediately report to the maintenance department, or their Manager, all broken chairs, missing casters, stuck drawers, cracked glass and any other hazards
- Fill the second drawer from the bottom in a four-drawer filing cabinet before any of the others, to weight the bottom and to prevent it from tilting over.
- Return drawers and doors to the closed position after use to prevent bumping and tripping. Never open more than one drawer or door at a time.
- Place file cabinets where their use will not interfere with traffic patterns. Ensure cabinets or bookcases taller than 64 inches are attached to the wall to prevent toppling over.

Paper Cutters:

- Paper cutters are just small guillotines- very hazardous pieces of equipment.
- These pieces of equipment should be adequately guarded at all times.
- Always store paper cutters with the blade fully drawn down and fastened securely.

Electrical Equipment:

- Receptacles should be installed and electric equipment maintained so that no live parts are exposed
- Proper placement of electrical, telephone, and computer wires.
- Keep computer, phone and electrical cords out of aisles
- Office electrical equipment must be grounded and provided with a three-wire grounding plug
- Equipment must be properly grounded to prevent shock injuries
- A sufficient number of outlets will prevent circuit overloading
- Cords should not be dragged over nails, hooks, or other sharp objects
- Don't overload wall sockets and extension cords.
- Don't touch electrical switches, sockets, plugs, etc with wet hands.
- Frayed electrical cords, loose or broken electrical wires, broken outlet covers and receptacles, and worn or broken electrical plugs are dangerous and should be repaired or replaced before being used again.
- Moisture and electricity do not mix. Placing liquids on or around electrical equipment (such as computers, cash registers, radios, copiers, printers or microwaves) increases the risk of electrocution if the liquid spills and gets into the electrical equipment. This includes wet or sweaty hands.
- Do not block electrical panel doors. If an electrical malfunction should occur, the panel door and anything else in front of the door will become very hot.
- Electrical panel doors should always be kept closed, to prevent "electrical flashover" in the event of an electrical malfunction.

Fire Safety:

- Every office should post accepted evacuation routes in conspicuous places and have at least one practice office evacuation drill per year.
- A pre-determined emergency meeting place should be established so that an office head count can be taken after the office is evacuated. This will determine who may or may not still be in the building for the emergency response personnel.
- In planning an office, an escape route should be designed to ensure that employees would be able to make a fast exit in the event of a fire or other emergency. These routes must be completely free from obstruction.
- Office doors should always be free of obstructions, to permit egress in case of an emergency.
- All new associates should be trained in the accepted evacuation practices.
- Everyone should be aware that there are a surprising number of flammable materials used in offices. These products include white-out, glue, cleaning solvents, and even fingernail polish.
- Remember that you should not smoke when using these materials.
- Wastepaper baskets are potential fire danger.
- Fire equipment, extinguishers, fire door exits, and sprinkler heads should remain unobstructed. Materials should be at least 18 inches minimum away from sprinkler heads.

Lifting:

- Associates should always practice correct lifting
- Associates should use good judgment and correct lifting posture when it is necessary to move or carry office machines, and should get help if necessary. It is recommended that two associates lift anything over fifty pounds or use mechanical assistance.
- Furniture moving should always be conducted by outside, trained personnel
- Take a balanced stance feet placed shoulder-width apart. When lifting something from the floor, squat close to the load.
- Keep your back in its neutral or straight position. Tuck in your chin so your head and neck continue the straight back line.
- Grip the object with your whole hand, rather than only with your fingers. Draw the object close to you, holding your elbows close to your body to keep the load and your body weight centered.
- Lift by straightening your legs. Let your leg muscles, not your back muscles do the work. Tighten your stomach muscles to support your back. Maintain your neutral back position as you lift.
- Never twist when lifting. When you must turn with a load, turn your whole body, feet first.
- Never carry a load that blocks your vision.
- To set something down, use the same body mechanics designed for lifting.

First Aid:

- Each office within a building should have its own first aid kit.
- A seemingly minor cut can easily turn septic and lead to blood poisoning if a Band-Aid was not applied at the time of injury to keep out germs.

Some More Safe Practices:

- Guard the sharp edges of furniture to prevent personal injury. Keep desk "pull-out" writing surfaces closed when not in use.
- Practice good housekeeping skills. Floors should be free of obstacles and garbage cans should be kept out of the way and emptied frequently.
- Clean up spills immediately to prevent slipping accidents.
- Report all defects such as loose tiles, broken steps, railing and doors immediately.
- Do not participate in horseplay.
- Office equipment such should not be placed on the edges of a desk, filing cabinet, or table.
- Keep razor blades, tacks and other sharp objects in closed containers.
- Use the proper tool for the job at hand.
- Jewelry, long hair, ties and other clothing should be kept clear of the moving part of all office machines.
- Do not cover air vents or obstruct airflow from registers. Do not place furniture, equipment, or materials in locations that will interfere with air movement around thermostats.
- Report any observed pest control problems. Never attempt to apply any pest control chemical yourself.

This list of office safety guidelines is not intended to be a complete hazard analysis. Associates are urged to apply their initiative and personal knowledge in developing additional safety controls.