

Office Safety

Each year, office workers suffer about 40,000 disabling injuries at work, costing an estimated \$100 million annually in medical care and workers' compensation. Companies also pay a high price in lost productivity when a valuable employee is disabled.

Needless claims and costs can be avoided by checking all office areas to identify potential hazards.

Following is a checklist of basic questions that will help improve office safety:

1. Has the office been laid out efficiently?
2. Does work flow through the office with a minimum of unnecessary travel?
3. Are workstations secure and equipment protected from falling from tables or desks?
4. Are filing cabinets and other heavy equipment placed against walls or columns and secured to the floor or wall, if necessary?
5. Are file drawers installed properly to keep from opening into aisles?
6. Are doors that can be approached from both sides equipped with a clear glass pane for visibility?
7. Are plate glass surfaces marked so that workers won't walk into them?
8. Is electrical equipment grounded and provided with a three-wire grounding plug?
9. Do employees routinely report all broken chairs, missing casters, stuck drawers, cracked glass, and any other hazards?
10. Are floors and traffic aisles kept free of tripping hazards such as telephone or electrical cords, file drawers, boxes, and carts? Is carpeting repaired or replaced if there are holes, tears, or rips?
11. Does the office follow good housekeeping rules? Are spills around coffee or water dispensers cleaned up promptly?
12. Are floor waxes nonskid? Are slippery floor and walkway conditions corrected immediately?
13. Are all employees cautioned to walk, not to run, and to watch their step? Are employees encouraged to wear shoes that provide stable footing?
14. Are outside walkways, parking areas and entrances maintained free of ice, holes, obstructions, or tripping hazards? Are floor mats or runners used at entrances?
15. Are all areas well lighted?
16. Are steps and stairs provided with handrails, nonskid treads, and adequate lighting? Is storage prohibited on stairs?
17. Are ladders used rather than boxes, chairs or other makeshift climbing devices? Are the ladders in good repair? Are they used and stored properly?
18. Have employees been instructed in correct lifting methods (back straight, legs bent)?
19. Are employees cautioned to use good judgment and correct lifting posture when it's necessary to move or carry office machines, and to get help if necessary?
20. Is furniture moving done by trained people?
21. Are first aid supplies in a convenient spot? Do the office manager and the switchboard operator have the telephone numbers of ambulances and emergency medical services readily available?
22. Are any personnel in the office medical or paramedical professionals? If not, are any in the office staff trained in emergency procedures and the administration of first aid?
23. Are workstations well-lit, and can the chair, light, and/or keyboard area be adjusted so each employee works comfortably?
24. Are smoking regulations implemented?

The suggested checklist is not intended to be a complete hazard analysis. Individual managers and supervisors are urged to apply their initiative and personal knowledge in developing effective controls.