

February 15, 2002

Offices Look too Safe!

Compare to the molten metal and massive machines found in other workplaces, office hazards seem pretty tame. However, each year an estimated 40,000 workers receive disabling injuries from office accidents. In addition, there are many more cases of bad backs, skin rashes and bruises that go unreported.

Falls:

The leading causes of office injuries are slipping, tripping and falling. Sound familiar? Falls are also a big cause of incidents in the plant and at any jobsite.

Falls from the same level can cause more incidents and injuries than falls from ladders or scaffolds, and they can happen just as easily in the office as anywhere.

Here are some ways to prevent falls:

- Keep the office free from clutter. Boxes should be stacked out of the way of traffic in the proper storage area. Trash and spills should be cleaned up from the floor.
- Re-route electrical cords away from traffic areas.
- Report and repair any defective chairs. Be extra careful with chairs that has wheels on them.
- Close drawers so nobody will trip over them. A trip over an open drawer can cause much worse injuries than just bruised shins.
- If you see loose carpeting, close off the area and report it.
- Don't use makeshift ladders such as boxes stacked on chairs. Use stepladders and stepstools correctly.
- Hold on to the hand railing when walking up and down steps.

Fires:

- Know where to find the fire extinguishers and know how to use them.
- Post emergency numbers, first aid contacts and evacuation procedures for your office where everyone will be sure to see them.
- Do not overload electrical circuits.

- Use appropriate protective equipment, such as gloves or safety eyewear when handling these products.

Safe Lifting

A worker might consistently make a conscious effort to safely lift loads in the warehouse because he is prepared for the possibility of injury. The same person can be injured by lifting a box of envelopes. They are not expecting to get hurt in an office environment and fail to lift properly.

- Don't lift a load you cannot handle, such as office furniture or equipment.
- Plan your lift carefully so that your leg muscles, rather than your back, handle most of the load.
- Don't twist your body even when lifting a light load.
- Make sure your back is straight and your footing is secure. Use ladders and stepstools safely.

Heavy Objects:

- Filing cabinets can cause serious injury. Open just one drawer at a time. If you open more than that, you risk the cabinet falling over onto you. Load filing cabinet drawers evenly, starting with the bottom ones.
- Make sure shelves are securely anchored, and do not overload them. Do not place heavy objects on overhead shelves.

Office Entanglements:

- Long hair, jewelry and loose clothing are all potentially hazardous around office equipment. They can become entangled in moving parts of typewriters, computer printers, postage meters and other equipment.

Safety Tip: Remember, each year an estimated 40,000 workers receive disabling injuries from office accidents. Many of those injuries could have been prevented.



Special Announcement:

Don't forget the DOI Safety Week, April 1-5, 2002

Theme: "Protecting Employees with Effective Strategies"

Plan your safety week activities now!!!