

How Safe is Your Office?

by
State Compensation Insurance Fund

Many workers think that the office environment is the safest workplace. But, a safe office workplace requires hazard control, good housekeeping, and safe work practices.

Arrange your office to allow clear walkways and aisles throughout the rooms and near the exits. Attach tall heavy office furniture to the wall to avoid tipovers in an earthquake. Close file cabinet drawers, file doors, and pull-out work tables when not in use. To avoid jamming your fingers or hands, make sure that cabinet and desk drawers do not open into walls or other furniture. Close drawers and doors with the flat of your hand.

Prevent falls in the office by keeping walkways and floors clear of trash, cords, cables, and other items. Clean up work areas after each project and periodically throughout the day. Clean up liquid spills immediately and mark the hazard area with a "wet floor" sign until the floor dries. Walk slowly, and be aware of your surroundings. Use handrails when going up and down stairs. Wear proper footwear at the office; a slip-resistant sole and back strap are safest.

Store supplies and materials properly to maintain a safe workplace. Arrange your storage so that the heavier items are stored on lower shelves and keep lighter weight items on upper shelves. Keep a sturdy step stool in storage areas to avoid reaching. Use good body mechanics when lifting and moving items. Request an ergonomic evaluation from your supervisor if you feel discomfort while at your desk or performing other tasks at work.

Use only approved electrical equipment in the office. Examine electric cords and plugs for breaks, tears, and frayed wires before use. Do not use extension cords as a permanent source of electrical power; install an extra electric outlet if necessary. Do not create chains of extension cords and surge protectors ("daisy chains") because they can overload your electrical outlets and create fire hazards.

Periodic workplace safety inspections can keep your office safe. Report hazards to your supervisor quickly and make sure that they get corrected as soon as possible. Be prepared for an emergency in your building. Know your building emergency procedures, evacuation routes and assembly area. Know how to use a fire extinguisher and when it is safe to do so. Keep exits and aisle walkways clear to allow a quick evacuation. ••