

# Safety Toolbox Talk

## OFFICE HAZARDS

### Office Hazards

When we think of workplace safety, we usually see a worker dressed in high visibility clothing wearing a hard hat. Heavy equipment and machines and related hazards usually surround that worker.

### But what about the not so obvious hazards that may occur in other areas?

We seem to think injuries that happen in the operational areas will disappear at the office door. However, we all know that is not true. It is not unusual to hear of office workers tripping over a cable, spilling a hot drink over themselves, straining a muscle trying to move or lift a heavy piece of office equipment or tripping down the stairs.

The office environment does have its share of potential hazards, but following good office safety practices can eliminate the risk posed by the hazards.

### Access ways

- Wet floors may be slippery, so avoid walking on them.
- Walk - never run.
- Passageways should be kept clear of tripping hazards such as waste bins, electric cables, open drawers, ladders and personal belongings.
- Torn carpets, loose or curled mats, liquids spilled on floors, lighting failures or any other condition that could cause tripping or slipping should be reported immediately to your line manager.

### Stairways

- Use handrails, take one step at a time, keep to the left and do not hurry.
- Do not store or throw anything on steps or stairways. Even a piece of paper, a paper clip or a plastic wrapper can create a slipping hazard.
- Do not use your mobile while using the stairs.

### Filing cabinets

- File drawers as well as desk and cabinet drawers should be closed when not in use.
- Files should be placed far enough away from doors or passageways that they do not obstruct exit routes.
- Place the heaviest load in the lower drawers.
- Open only one file drawer at a time.
- When shutting a drawer, grasp the handle to avoid finger injuries.



## **Paper**

- Use caution when folding or handling paper - it can cut.
- Use paper clips or staples to fasten papers together. Be sure staples are fully closed.
- Use a staple remover to remove staples.

## **Smoking**

- Smoking is not permitted inside any building.
- Use designated areas only.
- Dispose of matches, ash and cigarette ends in the receptacles provided, not in a waste paper bin or skip.

## **Electrical equipment**

- Office furniture should be positioned next to electrical sockets so as to avoid cables crossing the floor and creating a trip hazard.
- Electrical equipment should be Portable Appliance Tested (PAT) with a suitable sticker showing date of last test and date next test is due.
- Damaged electrical equipment should be withdrawn from service immediately.
- Never bring personal electrical equipment onto site.
- Only authorised adapters and extension leads can be used.
- Never tamper with electrical equipment.

## **Machines and equipment**

- Machines with exposed moving parts must have guards fitted at all times.
- Do not operate a machine until you are trained and authorised.
- If you operate a machine, dress suitably for the job. Loose sleeves, ties, even long hair can get caught in moving machinery.
- Properly constructed paper cutters in good condition require common-sense precautions. Keep your fingers away from the knife when it comes down/across. Keep the knife in the down position when not in use. Loose guards or springs should be repaired immediately.
- When using or refilling staplers, keep your fingers away from the operating part.
- Only competent authorised personnel can undertake maintenance of office machinery.
- Scissors should be carried with the point facing away from you and facing the ground.

## **Storage**

- Only use stepladders or platforms provided for reaching high objects. Do not stand on a chair, box or other substitute.
- Heavy objects should be stored at ground/floor level.
- Storage areas should be kept clean and tidy.
- Flammable liquids and paints should not be stored in office areas.
- Flammable liquids necessary for office duties should be limited in quantities and must be stored in approved metal containers and kept away from heat.

## Housekeeping

Good housekeeping should be maintained at all times. **A tidy office is a safe office.**

## Pedestrians

- Be especially alert for vehicle traffic. When leaving a building, look both ways before entering the roadway.
- Always walk to the side of the road. Walk - do not run.
- Always use the designated pedestrian route provided.
- Never walk behind a reversing vehicle.
- Always ensure that the driver has seen you before walking in front of a vehicle.

## General

- Turn on the lights before entering a dark room or corridor. Report locations that are inadequately lit.
- To avoid falling, do not tilt back in a straight chair, do not lean back too far in a swivel chair and do not overreach.
- Do not lift beyond your strength. When heavy items are to be moved, arrange for necessary help and material-handling equipment. If an object to be handled may cause cuts or splinters, wear gloves.
- All sharp edges, splinters, and burrs on furniture or equipment should be removed promptly. Protruding nails should be removed or turned down.
- Do not carry pencils behind your ear or between your fingers with the point toward the palm of your hand.
- Do not remain at your desk or workplace when overhead work is being performed.
- Horseplay can cause injury and should not be tolerated.
- If work duties require you to enter plant areas, be certain that you wear eye protection and any other protective equipment required.

### QUESTIONS – (there may be more than one correct answer)

		<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>Why place heavy loads in the lower drawers of filing cabinets?</b>	Easier to find	Easier to fill	Less chance of toppling over
<b>2</b>	<b>Why should cables not cross aisles or passageways?</b>	Look untidy	Trip hazard	Prevent damage to the cable
<b>3</b>	<b>Ensure portable electrical equipment is tested - why?</b>	To cause you inconvenience	To protect against electrical faults	To minimise the chance of an electrical fire

