



Office Safety Safe Working Practices

All members of the staff are reminded that they too have a legal obligation to ensure that they do not work or conduct themselves in a way which will endanger the health and safety of themselves or anyone else. The following points are intended to draw attention to the hazards and dangers which are commonly found in offices and to give some guidance on how accidents can be prevented.

ASSESSMENT OF RISK

Employers are required to carry out risk assessments on all hazards which may pose a significant risk.

FALLS

The majority of accidents in an office are due to falls. Falls generally result from untidiness in the working environment such as leaving equipment and files lying on the floor, trailing flexes such as telephone wires or electrical cables, worn or damaged floor coverings, stair treads and risers, spilt liquids and from standing on chairs or boxes instead of using proper steps and ladders.

Staff also have a duty to ensure that, if in the course of their work they will have to use steps or ladders to reach files stored on the upper shelves of filing racks, they have available for use a sensible pair of shoes and do not attempt to climb up in unsuitable shoes.

LIFTING AND CARRYING

If the load is on the floor or low down always bend your legs and lift with the back straight. Do not attempt to lift or carry too much at a time. If moving heavy loads about for any distance, always use a trolley to avoid putting undue strain on the back.

Do not attempt to carry more than you can comfortably manage. Do not carry so much that you cannot see where you are going. Be especially careful when negotiating stairs while carrying things. Always use the handrail and don't carry so much that you are unable to do so.

Do not place or leave any objects in passages or on stairs which could cause someone else who is carrying something to walk into or fall over them.

WALKING

It is essential that staff obey the golden rule - 'WALK - DON'T RUN!' Running can cause an accident to yourself or to someone else. Be especially careful on stairs. Pay special attention if you suspect that the floors have just been polished and may still be slippery. If you find a floor surface that is slipper report it as a hazard and warn other staff.

Be particularly careful with swing doors, especially heavy entrance doors. Do not follow someone else too closely who may not be aware of your presence and let the door swing into you. Always ensure that there is nobody following you before releasing a swing door behind you. Pay special attention to any member of the public or child in the vicinity of a swing door as they may not be so aware of the potential danger as you are.

If you discover worn surfaces or coverings on the floor or stairs, obstacles placed in walkways or passages, or trailing wires or cables, report them to the Safety Team or to your Safety Representative.

OFFICE EQUIPMENT

Generally normal office equipment is not in itself dangerous, provided it is used sensibly and as intended.

Filing cabinets can be very heavy when full, so to avoid overturning, only one drawer at a time should be opened and drawers should always be closed when not in use. Try to spread the load evenly between the drawers and preferably to put more into the lower drawers than the top as this helps to prevent overturning. Filing cabinets should be positioned so there is ample room available when the drawers are fully opened, both for working space at the cabinet and for passing by.

Nothing should be stored on top of high filing racks or without adequate support at the ends. Storing items on the top of a rack makes them too difficult and dangerous to retrieve, even using steps. Heavy objects such as bricks or blocks should not be placed on racks, and particularly not on the higher shelves or on the top of racks, to keep files upright or to act as end stops because of the obvious danger of their falling off onto someone. Similarly racks should never be moved while loaded or with loose objects on the shelves or top of the racks.

Wooden furniture which is damaged or splintered should be reported. Be particularly careful with metal furniture which may have sharp edges on shelves or drawers.

MACHINES

Most offices contain electrically operated machines and the attendant electrical wiring and supply. Always ensure they are operating correctly. If there is any reason to think that a machine is not operating properly, disconnect it and do not use it until it has been checked and serviced. Always switch off electrical machines when not in use and disconnect before leaving the office for any length of time and especially at lunchtime or in the evening.

If you are expected to use or carry out routine servicing on a machine, even just cleaning it out, make sure you fully understand how to operate it and carry out any servicing routine. If chemicals or dyes are involved, always use protective clothing. Never attempt to carry out repairs to a machine yourself and only carry out routine servicing to a machine if you have been properly trained to do so.

OBSTRUCTIONS

General tidiness in the office is essential to ensure safety and efficiency as well as safeguarding the visual appearance of the office. All floors, passageways, walkways, stairs and other access routes must be kept clear of goods and equipment.

FIRE

Many fires in offices occur 'out of hours' but they are often the result of human error during working hours.

Keep clothing, towels, etc. away from heaters including storage heaters. The build-up of heat through lack of ventilation can cause a fire.

Switch off all electric appliances after use. Where possible remove all plugs from their sockets.

Keep all flammable liquids like stencil correcting fluid, typewriting cleansing fluid etc. in tightly closed containers.

The Council operates a No Smoking Policy throughout its premises.

Make sure that you know what to do if you discover a fire and also when the fire alarm is sounded. Instructions on these points are displayed in every office.

Familiarise yourself with the position of the fire extinguishers for your office and make sure that you know how to use them. Do not cover up extinguishers or move them to hold doors etc. open.

Keep all fire exits free from obstructions at all times.

Fire doors, marked by "FIRE DOOR KEEP SHUT SIGNS" are always fitted with self-closing devices. On no account should these doors be propped open. Their function is to hold back smoke and hot gases in the event of a fire in order that escape routes may be protected.

SKYLARKING

The playing of practical jokes and skylarking is not only dangerous but is an offence under the Health and Safety at Work Act. Think twice before you do anything which may cause injury to persons or damage property. It is also an offence and a breach of the safety rules to damage or misuse anything provided for health and safety.

ACCIDENTS

All accidents, no matter how minor, should be recorded on the Accident Form kept in your Department. If you are unable to find out who is responsible for the Accident Form in your Department consult the Safety Team.

First Aid boxes are available in offices where First Aiders are located. Notices are displayed indicating the location of First Aid boxes. These notices also indicate the name and location of the nearest trained First Aider. It is in your own interest to familiarise yourself with this information. If you have any difficulty in finding a First Aid notice applicable to your workplace consult your Team Leader.

TRAINING

Your employer has a duty to train all staff in the use of equipment and the day-to-day conduct of work. In the office environment this includes specific training in the use of VDUs and other office electronics, the ergonomics of office work and the correct way to lift and carry

awkward loads. Training in the use of fire equipment and emergency procedures is also mandatory.