

Army *Safety* Gram

Leading on the Edge for Safety Excellence

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Offices Hide Many Hazards

You may think of an office as a safe place to work. However, the average office harbors a surprising number of hazards which can cause serious accidents.

Take a tour of your work area, do a safety audit, and keep these pointers in mind:

- ◆ Tripping hazards are common in offices. Look for loose carpeting, cords, and cables running across traffic lanes, open drawers of desks and cabinets, and boxes of files and papers.
- ◆ Slipping hazards are also a common cause of falls. Watch out for spills of water and coffee, as well as mud or snow tracked in from outdoors. Mop these up promptly, or barricade the area until it can be cleaned.
- ◆ Keep stairways free of office clutter. A box of files or a pair of shoes left on a stairway can cause a fall. Even a pencil or a piece of paper left on the stairs can result in someone slipping and falling.
- ◆ Make sure that materials are stacked or piled safely to prevent landslides.
- ◆ Watch for electrical hazards. A common one is plugging too many pieces of equipment into one electrical outlet. Do not exceed the recommended limit for an outlet or power bar.
- ◆ Suspended floors covering electronic cords and cables are a structural feature in some offices. Floor openings should be guarded or covered to prevent falls.
- ◆ Moisture and electricity are a dangerous combination. Keep beverages such as coffee away from electrical equipment such as computers. A spill could result in damage to the equipment or – worse yet – electrical shock to you.
- ◆ Office furniture is the cause of many serious injuries. Furniture should be in good repair. Bolts, screws, hinges, and handles for doors and drawers should be secure. Drawers should open and close smoothly.
- ◆ Any wheeled chair should have five legs. Remove any unsafe or damaged chairs from service so they can be repaired or disposed of properly. Be wary of wheeled chairs which can roll over your toes.
- ◆ The office equipment you use should be comfortable and ergonomically designed. Arrange your work station to avoid excessive bending, twisting and repetitive motions.
- ◆ Ensure the office is adequately ventilated for the health and well-being of workers.
- ◆ Adequate lighting is important to prevent eyestrain and injuries. Burned out lights should be replaced promptly.
- ◆ Take a look around break areas too. Fire hazards, electrical dangers, and slippery floors are common problems. Smoke only in designated areas. Don't forget about the washrooms either.
- ◆ If your office is part of an industrial plant you may be exposed to more hazards. Be aware of the safety precautions required if you visit industrial work sites. For example, you may be required to wear eye protection.



An office safety audit is a good idea to uncover hazards and point out the need for safe procedures. Take a look around your office today.