

Network to Work Meeting – November 2022

RESOURCE DOCUMENT – *WORKPLACE SAFETY & EMPLOYMENT PORTFOLIOS*

Top 10 Workplace Safety Tips Every Employee Should Know

Workplace safety cannot exist on best practice guidelines and policies alone. A safe working environment is based on how well the people – workers at all levels - adhere to and communicate about safety standards.

A safe workplace is one that encourages employees to identify unsafe behaviors and opportunities for improvement while also making well-informed safety decisions during daily routine tasks. This list of the *Top 10 Workplace Safety Tips Every Employee Should Know* will help you to do your part to create a workplace safety environment based on shared responsibility:

1. Be Aware Of Your Surroundings

This step requires knowing the particular hazards of your job or workplace. Once you've learned these risks, you are able to keep clear of potential hazardous areas, and potential hazardous situations. Also, always be alert of machinery.

2. Keep Correct Posture to Protect Your Back

If you work at a desk, keep your shoulders in line with your hips to avoid back problems. If you're picking things up, use correct form so your back doesn't get hurt. Avoid stooping and twisting. If possible, always use ergonomic designed furniture and safety equipment so everything you need is within easy reach.

3. Take Regular Breaks

So many work-related injuries and illnesses occur because a worker is tired, burned out and not alert to their surroundings. Taking regular breaks helps you stay fresh on the job. One trick to staying alert is to schedule the most difficult tasks when your concentration is best, like first thing in the morning.

4. Use Tools and Machines Properly

Take the proper precautions when using tools, and never take shortcuts. Taking shortcuts is the leading cause of workplace injury. It's a huge safety risk to use a chair as a ladder or one tool in place of another for a specific job. Using tools the right way greatly reduces the chance of workplace injury.

5. Keep Emergency Exits Easily Accessible

In case of an emergency, you'll need quick, easy access to the exits. It's also recommended to keep clear access to equipment shutoffs in case you need to quickly stop them from functioning.

6. Report Unsafe Conditions to Your Supervisor

Your supervisor needs to be informed about any workplace safety hazards or risks. They are legally obligated to ensure their employees have a safe working environment and will take care of the unsafe conditions and make them safe for you and your coworkers.

7. Use Mechanical Aids Whenever Possible

Instead of attempting to carry or lift something that's really heavy in an attempt to save a sliver of time during your workday, take the extra minute to use a wheelbarrow, conveyor belt, crank or forklift. Too many injury risks are involved with trying to lift something that weighs too much.

8. Stay Sober

Around three percent of workplace fatalities occur due to alcohol and drugs. When a worker's ability to exercise judgment, coordination, motor control, concentration or alertness is compromised, this leads to any number of risks for workplace injury and fatalities.

9. Reduce Workplace Stress

Stress can lead to depression and concentration problems. Common causes of workplace stress include long hours, heavy workload, job insecurity and conflicts with coworkers or managers. Consider incorporating some of the wellness tips found below.

10. Wear the Correct Safety Equipment

If you're not wearing the correct [safety equipment](#) for a task, you may get injured. Depending on the job, equipment like earplugs, earmuffs, hard hats, safety goggles, gloves or a full-face mask greatly reduce the risk of workplace injury.

While it is up to facility managers and business owners to get their employees onboard with workplace safety efforts, you can do your part by following these tips. These simple initiatives really do make all of the difference.

Recognizing Hidden Dangers: 19 Steps to a Safer Office

Of course safety and health hazards can exist on worksites filled with heavy machinery and equipment, where employees often are required to engage in strenuous manual labor. It's harder to see the dangers of a job where most of the work tasks are completed while sitting in a chair in a climate-controlled office building. However, a surprising number of hazards can be present in an office setting.

Falls are the most common source of injury in an office, although workers also are injured by being struck by or against objects, and suffering ergonomic injuries.

Some simple changes to the workspace can be effective in eliminating hazards and reducing the number of injuries. Here are 19 steps you can take to reduce the risk of injury at the office.

Falls

Slips, trips and falls are the most common type of office injury. The National Safety Council says employees are 2.5 times more likely to suffer a disabling fall in an office setting than anywhere else. Several hazards contribute to these injuries, although most can be significantly reduced, often by raising awareness among employees.

1. Stay clutter-free

Boxes, files and various items piled in walkways can create a tripping hazard, according to OSHA. Be certain that all materials are safely stored in their proper location to prevent buildup of clutter in walkways. Further, in addition to posing an electrical hazard, stretching cords across walkways or under rugs creates a tripping hazard, so ensure all cords are properly secured and covered.

2. Step on up

Standing on chairs – particularly rolling office chairs – is a significant fall hazard. Workers who need to reach something at an elevated height should use a stepladder. Stepladders must be fully opened and placed on level, firm ground. Workers should never climb higher than the step indicated as the highest safe standing level.

3. Maintain a clear line of vision

Workers can collide when making turns in the hallways and around blind corners or cubicle walls. The National Safety Council suggests installing convex mirrors at intersections to help reduce collisions. If workers can see who is coming around the corner, collisions are less likely to occur.

4. Get a grip

Carpeting and other skid-resistant surfaces can serve to reduce falls. Marble or tile can become very slippery – particularly when wet. Placing carpets down can be especially helpful at entranceways, where workers are likely to be coming in with shoes wet from rain or snow.

Struck/caught by

Another major type of injury in the office setting comes from workers being struck by or caught by an object.

5. Shut the drawer.

File cabinets with too many fully extended drawers could tip over if they are not secured. Additionally, open drawers on desks and file cabinets pose a tripping hazard, so be sure to always completely close drawers when not in use.

6. Safe stacking.

Proper storage of heavy items can help reduce the number of office injuries. Large stacks of materials and heavy equipment can cause major injuries if they are knocked over. Store heavy objects close to the floor, and never exceed the load capacity of shelves or storage units.

Ergonomics injuries

Perhaps the most prevalent injuries in an office setting are related to ergonomics. Because office workers spend the bulk of their day seated at a desk and working on a computer, they are prone to strains and other injuries related to posture and repetitive movement. Ergonomics hazards can be difficult to detect. Many office conditions that appear harmless can be described as hazardous from an ergonomics perspective.

7. Utilize adjustable equipment.

One size does not fit all in an office workstation. Whenever possible, adjust your chair, work surface, monitor stand, etc., in order to accommodate your individual needs.

8. Keep your feet on the floor.

Often workers have their keyboard tray on the desktop, and they may need to raise up their chair so high that their feet can barely touch the floor. An employee's feet must be on the floor in order for a chair to be able to reduce pain and discomfort. Options such as adjustable keyboard trays or rolling tables adjusted to the proper height can eliminate this problem. Footrests are a "second-best option," but their small surface may impede some of the worker's movement.

9. Correct mouse placement.

Always place the mouse beside the keyboard. Having your computer keyboard on a tray, but the mouse placed on your desk can spell disaster for the neck and shoulder on the side of that mouse.

Vision problems

Although looking at a computer monitor cannot damage your eyes, spending a large portion of your workday at the computer can cause eyestrain. Eyes can become dry and irritated, and workers may begin having trouble focusing. A few work area adjustments can help alleviate some of these issues.

10. Dim the lights and use task lamps.

Fluorescent lights in office buildings often are too bright for optimal vision. Light that is at about half-of normal office levels is preferred. If more light is needed for a particular task, use individual task

lamps rather than increasing overall lighting. Lightbulbs in task lamps should be fully recessed to avoid the creation of a bright spot in one's line of vision.

11. Correctly position monitors.

Place your computer monitor slightly below eye level and 20-26 inches from your eyes. Screens that can tilt or swivel are especially beneficial.

12. Minimize screen glare.

Screen glare is a major cause of eyestrain in the office. To minimize strain, avoid positioning monitors opposite open windows, or be sure to always close shades or blinds. A glare reduction filter also can be used.

13. Wear the right glasses.

Workers should tell their eye doctor if they spend a large portion of the day working on the computer. The doctor can check the efficiency of vision at 20-30 inches – the typical distance a computer monitor should be placed. Glasses are available for computer use that allow the wearer to see the full monitor without having to excessively strain the neck.

14. Increase font size on computer.

Small font sizes on the computer can strain both your vision and your neck, as workers tend to pull the head forward to view smaller print. A simple adjustment to the font size on the computer screen can eliminate the need for this. "In many software programs, you can use the CTRL+ (plus) or CTRL- (minus) to increase or reduce the size of the page you are looking at.

15. Take a break.

Giving your eyes a rest and allowing them to focus on things at varying distances can help reduce strain and fatigue. OSHA recommends workers take a 10-minute break for every hour spent on the computer. These breaks can include working on tasks that require your eyes to focus on objects at a further range.

Fire safety

Some routine inspections around the office can help reduce the likelihood of fire causing devastation.

16. Maintain cords in good repair.

Damaged and ungrounded power cords pose a serious fire hazard and violate safety codes. If you use one, inspect it regularly for wear and dispose of it if it is frayed or has exposed wire. Further, cords should never be used if the third prong has been damaged or removed. Make sure cords are not overloading outlets. The most common causes of fires started by extension cords are improper use and overloading. Extension cords should be approved by a certifying laboratory such as Underwriters Laboratories, and only used temporarily to connect one device at a time.

17. Inspect space heaters.

If you use a space heater, verify the device is approved for commercial use and has a switch that automatically shuts off the heater if the heater is tipped over. Also, make sure the space heater isn't powered through an extension cord or placed near combustible materials such as paper.

18. Never block fire sprinklers.

Furniture and tall stacks of materials can block the range of fire sprinklers, reducing their effectiveness in the event of an emergency. Objects should never be placed higher than 18 inches below sprinkler heads to allow a full range of coverage.

19. Do not block escape routes or prop open fire doors.

Never store anything along an emergency exit route. These paths should remain free of clutter, and fire doors should not be held open by unapproved means (such as with a garbage can or chair), as this creates a significant fire hazard.

Seven Ways to Well Being

A review of the most up-to-date evidence suggests that building the following actions into our day-to-day lives is important for well-being:

- 1. Connect:** with the people around you. With family, friends, colleagues and neighbors. At home, work, school or in your local community. Think of these as the cornerstones of your life and invest time in developing them. Building these connections will support and enrich you every day. Sharing your concerns with trusted friends, family or colleagues can do wonders for one's well-being.
- 2. Yet Know When to Disconnect:** The constant barrage of information on the Internet can amplify our fears, concerns and stress. It's important to check in with yourself and assess how you are doing physically and mentally. When feeling overwhelmed by information overload, give yourself permission to unplug. Take a break from social networking. Limit the time you spend online. Unfollow or avoid individuals or news sites that cause unwelcome negativity.
- 3. Be Active:** Go for a walk or run. Step outside. Cycle. Play a game. Garden. Dance. Exercising makes you feel good. Most importantly, discover a physical activity you enjoy and that suits your level of mobility and fitness.
- 4. Take notice:** Be curious. Catch sight of the beautiful. Remark on the unusual. Notice the changing seasons. Savor the moment, whether you are walking to work, eating lunch or talking to friends. Be aware of the world around you and what you are feeling. Reflecting on your experiences will help you appreciate what matters to you.

5. Keep learning: Try something new. Rediscover an old interest. Sign up for that course. Take on a different responsibility at work. Fix a bike. Learn to play an instrument or how to cook your favorite food. Set a challenge you will enjoy achieving. Learning new things will make you more confident as well as being fun.

6. Maintain balance through mindfulness: Take time for restorative activities like yoga, guided meditation, coloring, resting, etc.

7. Give: Do something nice for a friend, or a stranger. Thank someone. Smile. Volunteer your time. Join a community group. Look out, as well as in. Seeing yourself, and your happiness, linked to the wider community can be incredibly rewarding and creates connections with the people around you.

Workplace Wellness Tips to Maintain Mental & Physical Wellness

1. Eat your Lunch Away from the Computer

While it is tempting to eat lunch while catching up on emails, it is important to step away and take some time for yourself. This will improve your mood, wellbeing and lead to higher engagement at work.

2. Add Greenery to your Workspace

Adding plants improves the look and feel of your workspace and scientific evidence suggests interactions with indoor plants can reduce physical and mental stress.

3. Try Meditation

Meditation will help you to disconnect and focus on your mental wellbeing. It can help reduce stress, ease anxiety, and lower blood pressure. Done at the beginning of the day, it helps you start your day with a clear and focused mind. Done at day's end, it helps you put the day behind you and focus on yourself.

4. Get Physical

Try to schedule at least 20 to 30 minutes of physical activity every day. Simple possibilities include strolling your neighborhood, following an online workout video and morning yoga.

5. Stay Social

If you aren't able to see your co-workers in person on a daily basis, find ways to stay connected and bond with them via Zoom lunches or virtual gatherings.

6. Listen to Music

Music is a great outlet for increasing morale and lifting spirits.

7. Set Healthy Boundaries

Take active steps to separate yourself from your work day. Shut down your computer. Close your door. Set your status to “out of office”.

Sources:

“10 Workplace Wellness Tips to Maintain Mental & Physical Wellness”, from TeamBonding, July 12, 2022,
<https://www.teambonding.com/10-workplace-wellness-tips-to-maintain-mental-physical-wellness/>

“Workplace Well-being”, <https://www.businessballs.com/self-management/workplace-well-being/>

“Promoting Workplace Mental Health in the Age of Covid”, by Elizabeth Bille and Erin McClintock, Everfi from Blackbaud,
<https://everfi.com/blog/workplace-training/workplace-mental-health-coronavirus/>

“Top Ten Workplace Safety Tips Every Employee Should Know”,
<http://www.arbill.com/arbill-safety-blog/bid/182469/Top-10-Workplace-Safety-Tips-Every-Employee-Should-Know>

“Recognizing Hidden Dangers: 25 Steps to a Safer Office”, from *Safety + Health, The Official Magazine of the National Safety Council Congress & Expo*. By Laretta Claussen, June 1, 2011
<http://www.safetyandhealthmagazine.com/articles/recognizing-hidden-dangers-25-steps-to-a-safer-office-2?page=2>

Employment Portfolio Development Activity

Use the following “Other Skills and Training” worksheet to create a list of off-site training activities, volunteer experience, and skills that you could add to your resume or portfolio or mention in an interview.

Other Skills and Training Worksheet:

1. Start with the skills you have now. Do you speak a second language? Do you have job-specific skills or computer skills? Write your particular skills on the lines below. ***I am skilled at:***

2. Next, list the training workshops and courses you have completed. If you know them, include the completion dates. ***I have completed these training workshops and courses:***

3. Now, add any skills for which you want to and plan to get training in order to be more prepared for employment. ***I want to/plan to get training in / by (date):***

4. Finally, list your volunteer experience and the volunteer experience you want to or plan to have to improve your work skills. ***My volunteer experience:***

I plan to volunteer at:
