



General Office Safety

An office may be quieter & neater than a plant or jobsite but it also has machinery, chemical, slip & fall, & fire hazards.

Cost of injuries to office workers can be as high as those of plant or jobsite workers. Your downtime cost & inconvenience while they recuperate can be as high, too. Shown below are some hazards found in most offices, along with ways to eliminate or minimize them shown in *italics*.

Machines (*e.g. copier, shredder, fax, printer*) Permit only trained persons to use machines; remind users to keep body, hair, clothing, & jewelry from moving and/or hot parts; warn users to never operate if protective guards are not in place; plug electric machines only into proper, grounded outlets; replace defective or damaged power cords; replace electrical plugs that are missing ground prongs; allow only qualified persons to service or repair machines; keep combustibles from hot parts

Chemicals (*e.g. correction fluid, machine toner*) Ensure users follow label directions & understand the hazards shown in the material safety data sheets (MSDS); substitute safer chemicals if possible

Slip & fall (*e.g. power cords in walkways, poor housekeeping, and cramped conditions*) Keep power cords out of walkways or cover with thresholds anchored to floor; replace extension cords with permanent outlets; arrange furniture & equipment so aisles are clear & workers will not bump each other as they work; clean spills immediately; use nonslip floor wax; use mats at doors in bad weather; provide adequate light; provide handrails for stairs

Ergonomic hazards (*e.g. typist/keyboard operator wrists at awkward position or slouching in chair*) Provide adjustable chairs and/or workstations so workers can adjust heights according to their comfort; require workers to take momentary breaks to stretch, relax muscles, or to look away from computer screen; provide phone operator with headset; assign varying tasks to workers to prevent their making the same movements the entire shift; teach & have workers practice safe lifting; place items to be lifted between knee & knuckle height

Hazards of going from office to plant/jobsite (*e.g. noise, flying debris, chemical splash*) Provide safety equipment (*e.g. goggles, earplugs*) & require their use; inform office workers about areas they are to avoid (*e.g. welding area if they lack welding goggles or hoods*); warn them not to touch workers to get their attention-a distracted worker may lose control of a tool or machine & injure him/herself as well as the office worker

Fire hazards (*e.g. inks, solvents, machinery that becomes hot, smoking*) Forbid smoking or allow only in designated areas & provide adequate ashtrays; teach users to keep flammable chemicals away from sources of heat or sparks; forbid portable heaters or keep them clear from combustibles & avoid using power cords that are too small; train workers what to do in case of fire or other emergency; do not overload electric circuits