



Safe Practices - Office

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Safe Practices

We expect all our employees to be safety conscious and to assist us in finding conditions that might cause an accident or incident. Report any unsafe conditions or any injury received while at work, even if slight, to your manager.

It is our policy to provide and maintain safe and healthful working conditions, follow operating practices that will safeguard all employees and result in safe working conditions and efficient operation. The following rules and practices have been established for the safety and well-being of employees.

General Safety Tips for the Office

- Know the safety rules for your job. When in doubt about any safety practice, ask your manager. If a condition does not look safe to you, please notify your manager immediately.
- Anyone known to be under the influence of drugs or intoxicating substances that impair the employee's ability to safely perform the assigned duties shall not be allowed at work while in that condition.
- No one will knowingly be permitted or required to work while the employee's ability or alertness is impaired by fatigue, illness, or other causes that it might unnecessarily expose the employee or others to injury.
- Keep your work area clean and orderly.
- Keep all foreign materials off the floor.
- All cords running into walk areas must be taped down or inserted through rubber protectors to prevent tripping hazards.
- Be extra cautious when handling knives, scissors, letter openers, staplers, staple removers and other sharp or pointed instruments.
- Be aware of all exits in case of an emergency. Make sure you know where the closest exit is to your work area.
- Be aware of the closest fire extinguisher in your work area and around the office.
- Do not block exits, store materials or equipment in front of or block fire doors, aisles, fire extinguishers, gas meters, electric panels, or traffic aisles.
- Do not leave chairs, electric cords, stools, phone cords, boxes, pallets etc., in walkways.
- Never work under drawers that are left open above you and keep all desk and file drawers closed when unattended. Try to store the heaviest materials in the bottom drawers.
- Do not use chairs, boxes, or other makeshifts to reach high places. Use proper stools or ladders.
- Never tilt backward in a chair.
- Routinely inspect chairs that tilt for broken springs, loose screws, and defective welds.
- Watch out for recently waxed floors, loose carpeting, floorboards, and tile. Report problems immediately to your manager.
- Wipe up all spills.
- Wear appropriate shoes.
- On stairways, use handrails and take one step at a time. Report worn treads and broken or loose stairs to your manager.
- Avoid obstructing your vision when carrying large loads. Do not hurry, especially around corners.
- Use as much light as you need to get the job done safely and report dirty or inoperative lights to your manager.
- Keep frequently used items within easy reach.

- Horseplay and other acts which tend to endanger the safety or well-being of employees are prohibited. Fighting or instigating fights will not be tolerated.

Accident Reporting and Investigation

- To provide prompt and adequate medical attention it is especially important that you report all job-related injuries to your manager who will then call your manager immediately.
- If you are injured but do not see a doctor until that evening or later, tell your manager as soon as possible. A drug and alcohol test is required for a work-related injury, accident or incident.
- If you are involved in or witness an accident in the office, please cooperate with your manager by helping determine what caused the accident. Your ideas about what caused the accident may help to prevent a similar occurrence. We must be notified of any injury immediately.
- The managers are responsible for call and submitting reports on injuries, illnesses, or accidents to your manager.

Requirements For Reporting a Work-Related Injury

- The manager is to fill out an accident report in detail and give it to Human Resources.
- If the injured employee needs medical attention, send to the designated treatment facility.
- If they hold the injured worker over at the medical facility or hospital, call your manager and report.
- If the employee refuses medical attention, still fill out a report and note the employee refused treatment and then send the report to your manager.
- We must send the employee for a drug and alcohol test whether they refuse treatment or not.
- If the injury or accident is questionable, document this on your report and why you feel it did not happen at work or at all.
- If the employee went to a medical facility or hospital for treatment, you must get a return-to-work slip from the treating physician - if it notes modified duty contact your manager for a decision to put the employee back to work.
- If needed, take pictures of the area when it involves another employee, a third party or a severe injury.
- All injuries are to be reported, there are no exceptions.
- All original paperwork, reports, return to work slips are to be in the head office within 24 hours.

Requirements for a Return to Work

1. The HR Manager is to receive a return-to-work slip from the doctor.
2. If the return-to-work slips states “modified duty,” do not put the employee to work, call and talk with HR.
3. The return-to-work slip needs to state return to work with no restrictions.
4. If an injured employee wants to return to work without an okay from the doctor, do not, under any circumstances, put him back to work. No exceptions.

Emergency & Fire Prevention

Please see our written program.

Ergonomic Tips

Repetitive and prolonged use of a computer keyboard and/or mouse can lead to muscle aches and discomfort. Posture and positioning are important. Try to incorporate the following tips into your work style to avoid problems:

- Maintain good posture when working. Sit all the way back in the chair against the backrest. Keep

- your knees equal to, or lower, than your hips with your feet supported.
- Keep your elbows in a slightly open angle (100° to 110°) with your wrists in a straight position. The keyboard tilt can help you attain the correct arm position. A negative tilt (front of keyboard higher than back) helps when working in upright sitting positions. If you recline, a positive tilt (front of the keyboard lower than the back) might be necessary.
 - Avoid overreaching. Keep the mouse and keyboard within close reach. Center the most frequently used section of the keyboard directly in front of you.
 - Center the monitor in front of you at arm's length distance and position the top of the monitor 2" to 3" above seated eye level. You should be able to view the screen without turning or tilting your head up or down.
 - Place source documents on a document folder positioned between your monitor and keyboard. If there is not enough space, place documents on an elevated surface close to your screen.
 - Use good typing technique. Float your arms above the keyboard and keep your wrist straight when keying. If you use a wrist rest, use it to support your palms when pausing, not while keying.
 - Hit the keyboard keys with light force. The average user keys four times harder than necessary.
 - Keep your wrists straight and hands relaxed when using your pointer. Do not hold the pointer with a tight grip or extend fingers above the activation buttons. Avoid moving the pointer with your thumb or wrist. Movement should originate at your shoulder and elbow.
 - Limit repetitive motions. Reduce keystrokes with macros and software programs such as voice recognition. Reduce pointing device movement with scroll locks and keystroke combinations.
 - Customize your computer settings. The screen font, contrast, pointer size, speed, and color can be adjusted to maximize comfort and efficiency.
 - Reduce glare. Place your monitor away from bright lights and windows. Use an optical glass glare filter when necessary.
 - Take eye breaks and intermittently refocus on distant objects. Try palming your eyes in your hands to reduce eye fatigue.
 - Work at a reasonable pace and take frequent stretch breaks. Every few hours, try to get up and move around.
 - Use of non-prescribed medications, or wrist splints, can often be more harmful than helpful. If you begin to develop symptoms, seek help. Early intervention can prevent future problems.
 - Your lifestyle and physical fitness affect how you feel at work. Stay in shape by stretching and exercising regularly.

Tips for Your Eyes

- Follow the 20-20-20 rule. Every 20 minutes, take a 20 second break and look 20 feet away to rest your eyes.
- Remember to blink and breathe while you work. Blinking is critical to keep your eyes lubricated. Breathing can help you stay relaxed.
- Keep your screen clean. If you use a glare reduction filter, remove it and clean both the filter and the screen.
- Reduce glare on your screen by eliminating or reducing overhead, direct lighting, covering windows with blinds or shades, and eliminating reflective surfaces.
- Select a high-quality monitor with at least a 70 Hz refresh rate, 800 by 600 resolution, and dot pitch .28 mm or lower.
- Set the size of the font about three times the size required for normal reading. Test this by moving three times the distance you sit from your screen and see if you can still read the text.
- Set up your work within easy viewing distance and position to avoid glare. The most frequently viewed items should be directly in front of you.

- Have regular eye check-ups, especially if the computer bothers your eyes.

Work Techniques Checklist

Complete this checklist to determine if you use proper techniques when working at your computer. If not, use information provided in "Tips for Computer Users" and "Tips for Using Your Computer Pointing Device" to help you adjust.

Posture:

- Are you sitting against the back of your chair while you work?
- Is your head/neck upright and centered over your shoulders when you look at the screen or documents?
- Are your shoulders relaxed when keying and using the mouse?
- Are your arms close by your sides when you use the keyboard or pointer?
- Are your elbows bent at a 110-110-degree angle when you use the keyboard or pointer?
- Are your wrists in a neutral position (aligned with your forearm) when keying or using the pointer?
- Are you avoiding awkward postures such as an extended finger or thumb when keying or using the pointer?
- Do you use a headset rather than cradling the telephone between your head and shoulder?

Work Techniques:

- Are you using a light touch to key?
- Do you avoid leaning on the wrist rest while keying and mousing?
- Are you holding your mouse loosely with your hand and fingers in a relaxed position?
- Do you let go of the mouse when not using it?
- Do you take 20 second breaks after every 20 minutes of keying?
- Do you take eye breaks and look at a distance every 20 minutes?
- Do you blink while you look at the screen?
- Do you take stretch breaks throughout the day?
- Have you set up your work to encourage alternating sitting and standing throughout the day?
- Have you optimized your settings on your computer to make your work easier? (i.e., flicker rate, mouse speed, font size)
- Do you know how to adjust your keyboard tray and chair?

Computer Workstation

STEP 1: Your Chair -

- Push your hips as far back as they can go in the chair.
- Adjust the seat height so your feet are flat on the floor and your knees equal to or slightly lower than, your hips.
- Adjust the back of the chair to a 100°-110° reclined angle. Make sure your upper and lower back are supported. Use inflatable cushions or small pillows if necessary. If you have an active back mechanism on your chair, use it to make frequent position changes.
- Adjust the armrests so that your shoulders are relaxed. If your armrests are in the way, remove them.

STEP 2: Your Keyboard - An articulating keyboard tray can provide optimal positioning of input devices. However, it should accommodate the mouse, provide leg clearance, and have an adjustable height and tilt mechanism. The tray should not push you too far away from other work materials such as your telephone.

- Pull up close to your keyboard.
- Position the keyboard directly in front of your body.
- Determine what section of the board you use most frequently and readjust the keyboard so that section is centered with your body.
- Adjust the keyboard height so that your shoulders are relaxed, your elbows are in a slightly open position (100° to 110°), and your wrists and hands are straight.
- The tilt of your keyboard is dependent upon your sitting position. Use the keyboard tray mechanism, or keyboard feet, to adjust the tilt. If you sit in a forward or upright position, try tilting your keyboard away from you at a negative angle. If you are reclined, a slight positive tilt will help maintain a straight wrist position.
- Wrist rests can help to maintain neutral postures and pad hard surfaces. However, the wrist rest should only be used to rest the palms of the hands between keystrokes. Resting on the wrist rest while typing is not recommended. Avoid using excessively wide wrist rests, or wrist rests that are higher than the space bar of your keyboard.
- Place the pointer as close as possible to the keyboard. Placing it on a slightly inclined surface or using it on a mouse-bridge placed over the 10-keypad, can help to bring it closer.
- If you do not have a fully adjustable keyboard tray, you may need to adjust your workstation height, the height of your chair, or use a seat cushion to get in a comfortable position. Remember to use a footrest if your feet dangle.

STEP 3: Monitor, Document, and Telephone - Incorrect positioning of the screen and source documents can result in awkward postures. Adjust the monitor and source documents so that your neck is in a neutral and relaxed position.

- Center the monitor directly in front of you above your keyboard.
- Position the top of the monitor approximately 2-3” above seated eye level. (If you wear bifocals, lower the monitor to a comfortable reading level.)
- Sit at least an arm's length away from the screen and then adjust the distance for your vision.
- Reduce glare by careful positioning of the screen.
 - Place screen at right angles to windows
 - Adjust curtains or blinds as needed
 - Adjust the vertical screen angle and screen controls to minimize glare from overhead lights
 - Other techniques to reduce glare include use of optical glass glare filters, light filters, or secondary task lights
- Position source documents directly in front of you, between the monitor and the keyboard, using an in-line copy stand. If there is insufficient space, place source documents on a document holder positioned adjacent to the monitor.
- Place your telephone within easy reach. Telephone stands or arms can help.
- Use headsets and speaker phone to eliminate cradling the handset.

STEP 4: Pauses and Breaks - Once you have correctly set up your computer workstation use good work habits. No matter how perfect the environment, prolonged, static postures will inhibit blood circulation and take a toll on your body.

- Take short 1–2-minute stretch breaks every 20-30 minutes. After each hour of work, take a break or change tasks for at least 5-10 minutes.
- Always try to get away from your computer during lunch breaks.

- Avoid eye fatigue by resting and refocusing your eyes periodically. Look away from the monitor and focus on something in the distance.
- Rest your eyes by covering them with your palms for 10-15 seconds.
- Use correct posture when working. Keep moving as much as possible.

If under care, check with your healthcare professional prior to doing exercises or changing your workstation on your own. This is a guideline to assist in general workstation remedies. If you experience pain or discomfort, notify your manager.

Applying Good Work Practices

The way a task is performed and the workstation environment it is performed in can influence the risk of injury and general work productivity. Good technique can make a job easy and safe to accomplish. Good work practices include

- Adjusting the drapes or blinds.
- Moving the monitor away from sources of glare or direct light.
- Tipping the monitor slightly downward.
- Using diffusers on overhead lighting.
- Placing an anti-glare filter on the screen.
- Clean the monitor screen on a regular basis
- Avoid cradling the telephone between the head and shoulder. Hold the phone with your hand, use the speaker phone, or a headset.
- Keep frequently used items like the telephone, reference materials, and pens/pencils within easy reach.
- Position the monitor and keyboard directly in front of the user.
- Move between different postures regularly.
- Apply task lighting as to your needs.
- Use the minimum force necessary to strike the keyboard/ten-key keys.
- Use the minimum force necessary to activate the hole punch and stapler.
- Vary your tasks to avoid an extended period of one activity.
- Take mini breaks to rest the eyes and muscles. A break does not have to be a stop of work duties. However, it should be a different style of physical activity such as changing from keyboarding to using the telephone or filing.
- Neutralize distracting noise by using ear plugs, playing soft music, or turning on a fan.
- Maintain a comfortable workplace temperature by using layers of clothing or a fan.

Ergonomic Solutions to Backbreaking Tasks

- If you are doing a lot of twisting while lifting, try to rearrange the space to avoid this. People who must twist under a load are more likely to suffer back injury.
- Rotate through tasks so that periods of standing alternate with moving or sitting. Ask for stools or footrests for stationary jobs.
- Store materials at knee level whenever possible instead of on the floor.
- Make shelves shallower (12-18") so one does not have to reach forward to lift the object.
- Break up loads so each weighs less. If you must carry a heavy object some distance, consider storing it closer, request a table to rest it on, or try to use a hand truck or cart to transport it.

Falls

Falls are the most common office accident accounting for the greatest number of disabling injuries. The disabling injury rate of falls among office workers is higher than the rate for non-office employees. A

fall occurs when you lose your balance and footing.

One of the most common causes of office falls is tripping over an open desk or file drawer. Bending while seated in an unstable chair and tripping over electrical cords or wires are other common hazards. Office falls are frequently caused by slipping on wet floors or using a chair or stack of boxes in place of a ladder. Loose carpeting, objects stored in halls or walkways, and inadequate lighting are other hazards that invite accidental falls.

Fortunately, all these fall hazards are preventable. The following can help stop a fall before it happens.

- Be sure the pathway is clear before you walk.
- Close drawers completely after every use.
- Avoid excessive bending, twisting, and leaning backward while seated.
- Secure electrical cords and wires away from walkways.
- Always use a stepladder for overhead reaching. Chairs should never be used as ladders.
- Clean up or report spills immediately.
- Pick up objects co-workers may have left on the floor.
- Report loose carpeting or damaged flooring.
- Never carry anything that obscures your vision.
- Wear stable shoes with non-slip soles.

If you find yourself heading for a fall, remember to roll, do not reach. By letting your body crumple and roll, you are more likely to absorb the impact and momentum of a fall without injury. Reaching out an arm or leg to break your fall may result in a broken limb instead.

Fatigue

Since workers often put in long hours, fatigue can set in after being on the job for several hours. This not only affects your physical strength, but it can also affect your mental sharpness. To avoid fatigue (muscle tightness, aches, pains, and mental cloudiness), workers should take short breaks throughout the day to recover.

Fitness for Work

- Employees are expected to report for work without physical or mental impairment that may endanger themselves or their fellow workers. Employees are expected to maintain themselves in such condition throughout the work shift.
- If an employee is observed to be acting in an impaired or otherwise unsafe manner, the circumstances should be reported to a manager as soon as is possible. Should the manager be acting in such a manner, then the circumstances should be reported to our HR Director at the earliest opportunity.

Hazard Communications

Please see our written program.

Housekeeping

- Employees shall regularly inspect their work areas. Work areas are to be kept clean and orderly. Tools, wires, supplies, materials, and loose objects are not to be left in disorder during the workday, at the conclusion of the workday, or at the end of the project.

- Employees shall ensure that the aisles and workspaces remain clear. Clear paths, without obstruction of entry to and from the work area are to be always maintained.
- Suitable clearances shall be maintained below sprinkler heads for storage.
- Access to electrical switches and controls shall remain clear.
- There shall be no accumulation of paper, trash, sweepings, or debris.
- Exits and fire door closures shall remain unobstructed and in good working order.
- Spilled liquids or other materials must be cleaned up immediately.

Lifting

Safe lifting is one aspect of material handling, transporting the load safely is the other. How you move or carry and put down the load is just as important as how you pick it up.

Although a typical office job may not involve lifting large or especially heavy objects, it is important to follow the principles of safe lifting. Small, light loads (i.e., stacks of files, boxes of computer paper, books) can wreak havoc on your back, neck, and shoulders if you use your body incorrectly when you lift them. Backs are especially vulnerable; most back injuries result from improper lifting. Before you pick up a carton or load, ask yourself these questions:

- ♦ **First examine the load** - is it too heavy or bulky, should I break it into separate loads, should I ask a co-worker to help, or will I need a step ladder
- ♦ **If you have determined that you can lift the load yourself, you should then stand close to the load with your feet apart.** This will help your body remain balanced as you lift.
- ♦ **Next, squat down, bending at the hips and knees.** You should never bend at the waist with your legs straight, because doing so even with a light load could put undue stress/strain on your back.
- ♦ **Now grip the load an arch your lower back inward by pulling your shoulders back and sticking out your chest.** This posture distributes the weight of the load more evenly by taking pressure off the spine and lower back and allowing the bulk of the weight to be borne by the leg muscles.
- ♦ **Keep the load close to your body while you lift and your head up.** The closer the weight is to your body as you lift, the less strain it puts on your back, arms, neck, and shoulders.
- ♦ **Finally, when you set the load down, squat down, bending at the hips and knees, keeping your lower back arched inward.** Putting a load down incorrectly could result in injury just as easily as lifting it improperly in the first place.
- ♦ Inspect the object you are going to lift for sharp corners, nails or other things that may cause injury.

Lifting from a Seated Position

Bending from a seated position and coming back up places tremendous strain on your back. Also, your chair could be unstable and slip out from under you. Instead, stand and move your chair out of the way. Squat and stand whenever you must retrieve something from the floor.

Infection Control

Wash your hands after with soap or mild detergent and water before and after eating, smoking, using the toilet.

Knives/Sharp Instruments

- ♦ When handling knife blades and other cutting tools, direct sharp points, and edges away from you.
- ♦ Always cut in the direction away from your body when using knives.

- Do not use knives that have dull blades.
- Do not use knives as screwdrivers.
- Do not pick up knives by their blades.
- Carry knives/scissors with tips pointed towards the floor.

Security

- Always be aware of your surroundings. Keep your head up and hands out of your pockets while walking to and from your car.
- Immediately report any theft, suspicious activity, or persons to your manager.
- When parking, remove all valuables from sight and lock car doors.
- Do not enter an elevator car if you are concerned about other riders; instead, wait for the next car.
- Keep all valuables (money, purse, jewelry, etc.) out of sight when at your desk. Do not bring large sums of money or other valuables into the building.
- Secure laptop computers, PDAs, and other small electronic devices before leaving your workspace for extended periods of time (lunch, meetings, etc.).
- If you are working alone and are in the office before or after regular business hours, on weekends, or holidays, observe these additional guidelines:
 - Be sure doors close and lock after you.
 - Turn on lights as you move through the building.
 - Always be aware of the closest telephone (do not hesitate to call 911 if you feel threatened).
 - Be sure that someone at home knows that you are at work and is expecting you to check in by a specified time.
 - As you leave the office, be sure to turn off all equipment, lights, etc., after use.
- Weapons, including firearms, knives with blades, bow/arrow, pepper spray (mace, tear gas), and clubs, are not allowed on property.

Stocking Shelves

- When stocking shelves by hand, position the materials to be shelved slightly in front of you, so you do not have to twist when lifting and stacking materials.
- Place items on shelves so that they lie flat and do not wobble.
- Place heavier loads on the lower or middle shelves.

Storeroom Safety Rules

An overcrowded, unorganized storeroom is an accident about to happen. A neat, clean storeroom can reduce the potential for accidents.

Store Chemicals Safely

- All chemical containers must be properly labeled.
- Store chemicals according to instructions on container labels.
- Be aware of where the Safety Data Sheets (SDS) are kept for all the chemicals you use.
- Store flammable materials in a properly vented flammable liquids cabinet away from sources of ignition like hot water heaters.

Store Your Tools Safely

- Each tool should have its place in the storeroom. The tools should only be stored after inspecting them for safety hazards and cleaning them.
- Check electrical tools for frayed wires and defective plugs. Make sure the ground plug is in place.

- ✦ Cords should be neatly wrapped and secured on the tool.
- ✦ Keep extension cords in good repair.

Weight Can Be a Safety Hazard

- ✦ Heavier items should be stored on the lower shelves at about chest height or lower.
- ✦ Be careful not to overload shelves.

Electrical/Water Heater Rooms Are Not Storerooms

- ✦ Rooms with electrical panels are not designed as storerooms. However, if electrical rooms must be used for storage, make sure there is clear area at least 36" from electrical panels.
- ✦ Electrical rooms must be free of all liquids.
- ✦ Water heaters are a source of ignition. Do not store flammable materials in rooms with water heaters.

Keep It Neat

- ✦ Keep at least one aisle of your storage areas open at all times.
- ✦ Protruding nails and torn or sharp corners can cause serious cuts and bruises. Remove or pad them.
- ✦ Be alert to the careless actions of others.

Struck By or Striking Objects

Striking against objects is another cause of office injuries. Incidents of this type include:

- Bumping into doors, desks, file cabinets, and open drawers.
- Bumping into other people while walking.
- Striking open file drawers while bending down or straightening up.
- Striking against sharp objects such as office machines, spindle files, staples, and pins.

Pay attention to where you are walking, safely store materials in your work area and never carry objects that prevent you from seeing ahead of you.

Caught In or Between Objects

The leading disabling incidents occurs because of office workers who get their fingers or articles of clothing caught in or between objects. Office workers may be injured because of:

- Fingers caught in a drawer, door, or window.
- Fingers, hair or articles of clothing and jewelry caught in office machines.
- Fingers caught under the blade of a paper cutter.
- While working on office equipment, concentrate on what you are doing.