

## OFFICE SAFETY

### **General Office Safety**

A large percentage of workplace accidents and injuries occur in office buildings. Like the shop or laboratory, the office requires a few preventive measures to ensure a safe and healthful environment. Common causes of office accidents include the following:

- Slipping, tripping, and falling hazards
- Burning, cutting, and pinching hazards
- Improper lifting and handling techniques
- Unobservant and inattentive employees
- Improper office layout and arrangement
- Dangerous electrical wiring
- Exposure to toxic substances
- Horseplay

**REMEMBER:** The office building is not a sterile working environment; common workplace hazards can be extra dangerous when you ignore them.

### **Good Housekeeping Practices**

Many office accidents are caused by poor housekeeping practices. By keeping the office floor both neat and clean, you can eliminate most slipping, tripping, and falling hazards. Other good housekeeping practices include the following:

- Ensure that office lighting is adequate and available. Replace burned out light bulbs, and have additional lighting installed, as necessary.
- Ensure that electrical cords and phone cords do not cross walkways or otherwise pose a tripping hazard. If you cannot move a cord, have a new outlet installed or secure the cord to the floor with cord covering strips. Do not tape cords down or run them underneath carpet.
- Report or repair tripping hazards such as defective tiles, boards, or carpet immediately.
- Clean spills and pick up fallen debris immediately. Even a loose pencil or paper clip could cause a serious falling injury.
- Keep office equipment, facilities, and machines in good condition.
- Store items in an approved storage space. Take care to not stack boxes too high or too tight. Ensure that boxes are clearly labeled with their contents.

### **Preventing Cuts and Punctures**

Cuts and punctures happen when people use everyday office supplies without exercising care. Follow these guidelines to help reduce the chance for cuts and punctures:

- When sealing envelopes, use a liquid dispenser, not your tongue.
- Be careful when using kitchen knives, scissors, staplers, letter openers, and box openers. Any of these items could cause a painful injury.
- Avoid picking up broken glass with your bare hands. Wear gloves and use a broom and a dust pan.
- Place used blades or broken glass in a rigid container, such as a box, before disposing in a wastebasket.

### **Preventing Slips and Falls**

As outlined in the General Safety chapter of this manual, the easiest way to avoid slips and falls is to pay attention to your surroundings and to avoid running or rushing. To ensure safety for others in the office, however, follow these guidelines:

- Arrange office furnishings in a manner that provides unobstructed areas for movement.
- Keep stairs, steps, flooring, and carpeting well maintained.
- Ensure that glass doors have some type of marking to keep people from walking through them.

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## Office Safety, Continued

- Clearly mark any difference in floor level that could cause an accident.
- Secure throw rugs and mats to prevent slipping hazards.
- Do not place wastebaskets or other objects in walkways.

### Preventing Stress

To reduce stress and prevent fatigue, it is important to take mini-breaks (not many breaks) throughout the day. If possible, change tasks at least once every two hours. Stretch your arms, neck, and legs often if you do the same type of work for long periods of time. Rest your eyes often by closing them or looking at something other than the work at hand. For a quick pick-me-up, breathe deeply several times by inhaling through your nose and exhaling through your mouth. In addition, always try to eat your lunch somewhere other than your desk.

Other examples of stress-relieving exercises that can be done at your desk include the following:

- **Head and Neck Stretch:** Slowly turn your head to the left, and hold it for three seconds. Slowly turn your head to the right, and hold it for three seconds. Drop your chin gently towards your chest, and then tilt it back as far as you can. Repeat these steps five to ten times.
- **Shoulder Roll:** Roll your shoulders forward and then backward using a circular motion.
- **Upper Back Stretch:** Grasp one arm below the elbow and pull gently towards the other shoulder. Hold this position for five seconds and then repeat with the other arm.
- **Wrist Wave:** With your arms extended in front of you, raise and lower your hands several times.
- **Finger Stretch:** Make fists with your hands and hold tight for one second, then spread your fingers wide for five seconds.

