



# THE EHS CONNECTION

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH & SAFETY NEWSLETTER AUGUST 2017

## OFFICE SAFETY

The leading types of disabling accidents that occur within the office are the result of: FALLS, STRAINS AND OVEREXERTION, FALLING OBJECTS, STRIKING AGAINST OBJECTS, AND BEING CAUGHT IN OR BETWEEN OBJECTS.

### FALLS

Falls are the most common office accident, accounting for the greatest number of disabling injuries. 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 of these fall hazards are preventable. The following checklist 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, don't 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.

### STRAINS AND OVEREXERTION

Although a typical office job may not involve lifting large or especially heavy objects, it's 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:

- Is this too heavy for me to lift and carry alone?
- How high do I have to lift it?
- How far do I have to carry it?
- Am I trying to impress anyone by lifting this?

**IF YOU FEEL THAT THE LIFT IS BEYOND YOUR ABILITY, CONTACT YOUR SUPERVISOR OR ASK ANOTHER EMPLOYEE TO ASSIST YOU.**

## **SAFE LIFTING STEPS**

- Take a balanced stance, feet placed shoulder-width apart. When lifting something from the floor, squat close to the load.
- Keep your back in its neutral or straight position. Tuck in your chin so your head and neck continue the straight back line.
- Grip the object with your whole hand, rather than only with your fingers.
- Draw the object close to you, holding your elbows close to your body to keep the load and your body weight centered.
- Lift by straightening your legs. Let your leg muscles, not your back muscles, do the work. Tighten your stomach muscles to help support your back.
- Maintain your neutral back position as you lift.
- Never twist when lifting. When you must turn with a load, turn your whole body, feet first.
- Never carry a load that blocks your vision.
- To set something down, use the same body mechanics designed for lifting.

## **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 have to retrieve something from the floor

## **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 have to 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 foot-rests 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.

## **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 at all times, properly store materials in your work area and never carry objects that prevent you from seeing ahead of you.

## **OBJECTS STRIKING EMPLOYEES OCCUR AS A RESULT OF:**

- Office supplies sliding from shelves or cabinet tops.
- Overbalanced file cabinets in which two or more drawers were opened at the same time or in which the file drawer was pulled out too far.
- Machines, such as computers or monitors that were dropped on feet.
- Doors that were opened suddenly from the other side.

Proper material storage and use of storage devices can avoid these accidents.

## CAUGHT IN OR BETWEEN OBJECTS

The last category of leading disabling incidents occurs as a result of office workers who get their fingers or articles of clothing caught in or between objects. Office workers may be injured as a result 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.**

## MATERIAL STORAGE

Improperly stored office materials can lead to objects falling on workers, poor visibility, and they also can create a fire hazard. A good housekeeping program will reduce or eliminate hazards associated with improper storage of materials. Examples of improper storage include unstable piling, piling materials too high, and obstructing doors, aisles, fire exits and fire-fighting equipment. The following are good storage practices:

- Boxes, papers, and other materials should not be stored on top of lockers or file cabinets because they can cause sliding problems. Boxes and cartons should all be of uniform size in any pile or stack. Always stack material in such a way that it will not fall over.
- Store heavy objects on lower shelves.
- Try to store materials inside cabinets, files, and lockers.
- Office equipment such as computers, monitors, index files, lights or calculators should not be placed on the edges of a desk, filing cabinet, or table.
- Aisles, corners, and passageways must remain unobstructed. There should be no stacking of materials in these areas.
- Storage areas should be designated and used only for that purpose.
- Store heavy materials so you do not have to reach across something to retrieve them.

**FIRE EQUIPMENT, EXTINGUISHERS, FIRE DOOR EXITS, AND SPRINKLER HEADS SHOULD REMAIN UNOBSTRUCTED. MATERIALS SHOULD BE AT LEAST 18 INCHES MINIMUM AWAY FROM SPRINKLER HEADS!**

# WORKSTATION ERGONOMICS

Ergonomics means fitting the workplace to the workers by modifying or redesigning the job, workstation, tool or environment. Workstation design can have a significant impact on office workers health and well-being. There are a multitude of discomforts, which can result from ergonomically incorrect computer workstation setups. The most common complaints relate to the neck, shoulders, and back. Others concern the arms and hands and occasionally the eyes. For example, poorly designed chairs and/or bad postures can cause lower back strain; or a chair that is too high can cause circulation loss in the legs and feet. Certain common characteristics of computer workstation tasks have been identified and associated with increased risk of musculoskeletal problems. These include:

- Design of the workstation
- Nature of the task
- Repetitiveness of the job
- Degree of postural constraint
- Work pace
- Work/rest schedules
- Personal attributes of individual workers

Key to comfort is in maintaining the body in a relaxed, neutral position. The ideal work position is to have the arms hanging relaxed from the shoulders. If a keyboard is used, arms should be bent at right angles at the elbow, with the hands held in a straight line with forearms and elbows close to the body. The head should be in line with the body and slightly forward.

## ARRANGING YOUR WORKSTATION TO FIT YOU

- Adjust the height of the chair's seat such that the thighs are horizontal while the feet are flat on the floor.
- Adjust the seat pan depth such that your back is supported by the chair back rest while the back of the knee is comfortable relative to the front of the seat.
- Adjust the back rest vertically so that it supports/fits the curvature of your lower back.
- With the arms at your sides and the elbow joint approximately 90 degrees, adjust the height/position of the chair armrests to support the forearms.
- Adjust the height of the keyboard such that the fingers rest on the keyboard home row when the arm is to the side, elbow at 90 degrees, and the wrist straight.
- Place the mouse, trackball, or special keypads, next to the keyboard tray. Keep the wrist in a neutral position with the arm and hand close to the body.
- Adjust the height of the monitor such that the top of the screen is at eye level. If bifocals/trifocals are used, place the monitor at a height that allows easy viewing without tipping the head back.
- Place reference documents on a document holder close to the screen and at the same distance from the eye.

**A FOOTREST MAY BE NECESSARY IF THE OPERATOR CANNOT REST HIS/HER FEET COMFORTABLY ON THE FLOOR.**

# A CLEAN AND ORGANIZED WORKPLACE IS A SAFE WORKPLACE

## DO NOT ALLOW REFUSE TO COLLECT

- Cardboard, paper, sawdust, grinding debris, and oily rags can increase the fire load in a room
- Cardboard, paper, and cloth can be substrates for mold
- The properties of chemicals can change over time-they may become more reactive or unstable
- Food scraps and litter can attract cockroaches and rodents

## KEEP FLOORS CLEAN

- Accumulation of objects on the floor can create tripping hazards and make it difficult to maneuver around the work area
- Water or oil spilled on the floor can be especially hazardous since they are difficult to see
- Excessive dirt on the floor can affect footing
- Improper storage of items on the floor could affect the ability of someone to access a fire exit, fire extinguisher, pull station, eyewash, or emergency shower. Keep items away from the ceiling-18" for sprinklered areas and 24" for non-sprinklered areas
- Spilled chemicals could migrate to a floor drain and get into the environment.
- Keep paths to exits clear at all times

## ORGANIZE YOUR WORKSPACE

- Storing items in designated locations makes them easier to find and prevents a cluttered work-space
- Cluttered work surfaces limits your workspace
- Improperly stored containers could tip over and spill
- Store tools neatly and do not leave sharp objects or blades exposed

## MONITOR ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS

- Standing water and excessive moisture can create slip hazards or promote mold growth
- Poor lighting can affect one's ability to observe hazards in their workplace

**HOUSEKEEPING IS EVERYBODY'S RESPONSIBILITY!**

**ERGONOMIC ASSESSMENT:** CHRISTINE BODY HAS BEEN DOING ERGONOMIC ASSESSMENTS SINCE 1996 AND IS AVAILABLE TO DO THEM HERE ON CAMPUS. SHE CAN BE REACHED AT 312-2770 AND WOULD BE HAPPY TO ASSIST YOU WITH ANY QUESTIONS OR ISSUES.

**HAVE A SAFETY ISSUE OR CONCERN YOU'D LIKE TO REPORT? PLEASE CONTACT A MEMBER OF THE JOINT LABOR MANAGEMENT HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEE:**

### CSEA Members

Fred Matteson-Plumbing  
Mark Sierson-Plumbing  
Brian Bateman-BTC  
Joe Scanlon-BTC  
Mike Flack-Custodial  
Donna Monette-Custodial  
Melana Perkins-Custodial  
Shirley McCarthy-Custodial  
Dan Hoefler-Electrical  
Jason Hrcirik-CHP  
Roy Ayotte-CHP  
Sharon Cromie-Secretary

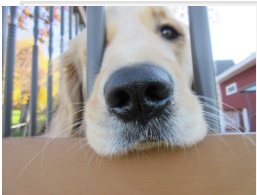
### Management Representatives

Eric Foertch-EHS  
Mary DePentu-Maintenance and Operations  
Christine Body-EHS  
Nick Scaturro-EHS

# AUGUST WORD SEARCH

For a chance to win a great prize (more like an OK prize, but-hey, it's a PRIZE!), complete the Word Search and send it via e-mail to [lisa.drake@oswego.edu](mailto:lisa.drake@oswego.edu) OR through Campus Mail: Lisa Drake, 110 Lee Hall. Make sure to put your name on it! The winner for July was Judy Castiglia. Look for: Falls, Strains, Overexertion, Falling Objects, Striking, Caught, Lifting, Ergonomic, Chair, Rotate, Injury, Fingers, Office Machines, Paper Cutter, Housekeeping, Boxes, Files, Shelves, Cabinets, Storage, Aisles, Corners, Materials, Work Station, Comfort, Seat Pan, Keyboard, Monitor, Organize.

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## Summer Dog Safety

### Tip:

Make sure your dog has unlimited access to fresh water: Our dogs get much thirstier than we do when they get hot, and other than panting and drinking, they really have no way to cool themselves down. Keep your pet in the shade as often as possible.

## DUTCHISM FOR AUGUST

### PLANNED VARIETY

SEASHELLS ON THE SEASHORE,

LIVING WELL ON THE TIDE.

EACH UNIQUE FOREVER MORE,

CARRYING THEIR CODE DEEP INSIDE.

