

Managing Office Safety

Injuries in office settings are often caused by a lack of basic "housekeeping." Excessive amounts of paper, supplies/materials, or other items can create obstacles in the environment. The office environment is more than just furniture and equipment placement, it includes issues such as cleanliness, order and maintenance.

Common Housekeeping Hazards

Piles - Papers stacked on floors or piled precariously on desks and tables are a highly flammable safety hazard, especially near electrical outlets. Piles are also a tripping hazard, and have the potential of falling from shelves or cabinets onto unsuspecting passersby.

Cleaning Supplies - All cleaning supplies should be clearly marked, stored above counter-level (to avoid danger in the event of young visitors), and kept in spill-proof containers. The phone number for poison control should be clearly posted on or near the storage cabinet.

Restroom Sanitation - Restrooms should be cleaned and sanitized at least once a day. Do not allow paper to litter the floor or counters. Supplies such as tissue, soap and paper towels should be in adequate supply. Candles should never be permitted.

Kitchen/Break Room Sanitation - Countertops and floors should be kept clean and free of debris. Spills need to be wiped or mopped promptly to avoid contamination or injury. Trash should be disposed of daily to avoid attracting insects or vermin. Rotting food, even in a refrigerator, is a health hazard. Clean appliances such as refrigerators and microwaves often.

Electrical Cords - Tangled bunches of electrical cords can create tripping hazards. Cords should be secured to a desk or other furniture and not placed in traffic areas.

Best Practices for Office Safety

- Establish daily, weekly, and monthly cleaning procedures; determine how often parts of the office should be cleaned and establish a roster of staff responsible for clean up. Note: bathrooms, kitchens, counters, work surfaces, phones, and keyboards should be cleaned on a daily basis.
- Identify cleanliness and safety expectations for all staff; for example, spills particularly liquids, need to be wiped up immediately.
- Dirt, grime, and garbage, if left to accumulate, can create health hazards and spread disease. Provide sufficient trash receptacles located in kitchens, staff lounges, break rooms and other locations where food is consumed.
- Implement a paper recycling program to cut down on paper, clutter and buildup.
- Cleanliness and good housekeeping can reduce allergic reactions and prevent the spread of illness.

When we share the responsibility for safety in the workplace, everyone wins!!