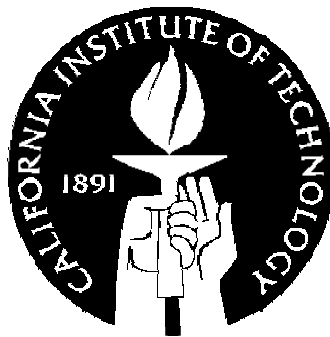


California Institute of Technology

Office Safety Plan



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Office Safety

Offices are safe places to work in, but injuries that do occur in office environments are not consequential. Complacency is a common cause of office accidents.

Accident Types

Accidents resulting in disabling injuries in office environments include falls, overexertion, striking against objects, objects striking workers, and repetitive motion injuries.

Falls

Falls are the most common office accident. Injuries may result from slips, falls from chairs and elevations. Slip and trip injuries may be caused by wet floors, worn footwear, trash on the floor, or a combination. Chair falls can occur when a person sits, rises, or moves on a chair. Leaning back and tilting chairs are also causes. Falls from elevations are represented by situations when standing on chairs or other office furniture, and ladders.

Overexertion

Injuries due to overexertion occur when employees attempt to move heavy objects. Reaching, stretching, twisting, bending down, and straightening the spine are associated with these injuries.

Striking Against

“Striking against” objects include injuries resulting from bumping into doors, desks, file cabinets, open drawers, and other individuals.

Objects Striking

“Objects striking” workers usually involve a falling object, file cabinets, drawers, office machines, and doors.

Repetitive Motion

Repetitive motion injuries, also known as “cumulative trauma”, include tendonitis, and carpal tunnel syndrome. Computer keying is a frequent cause of injury. Prevention of repetitive motion injuries involves addressing issues pertaining to an individual’s workstation and work habits.

Accident Prevention

To control any type of accident, hazards must be eliminated and exposures reduced. Office design should be efficient, convenient, and safe.

File Cabinets

File cabinets are a common source of injuries. File drawers should be kept closed when not removing or replacing materials. A full top drawer with empty or partially filled bottom drawers can cause the cabinets to tip over. File drawers should not open to narrow aisles. Do not place cabinets next to doors. During earthquakes, unsecured cabinets have fallen over, blocking doors. Cabinets should be bolted together or fastened to the floor or wall. Do not store heavy materials on top of cabinets.

Extension Cords

Use of electric extension cords should be avoided. Extension cords are designed for temporary use only. Cords should be kept out of aisles. If cords must cross the floor, they need to be covered with rubber mats designed for this purpose.

Electrical Appliances

Electrical appliances need to be maintained and regularly inspected for defects. Only UL-listed appliances are acceptable. Frequent removal of plugs from electrical outlets reduces the life expectancy of the cord. Appliances should have power switches so that the plugs do not need to be removed to shut off power.

Office Equipment

Office equipment should not be placed near the edge of tables or desks. Heavy equipment, including computers and monitors, should be secured to prevent from falling over. Heavy or awkward loads should be moved by at least two individuals. Don't attempt to move furniture alone. Use step stools or stepladders instead of chairs to reach high shelves. Electrical appliances, including paper shredders and electric typewriters, need to be grounded or double insulated.

Behavior

Employee behavior often contributes to an injury. Employees should receive proper training, adhere to accepted practices, and implement what is learned.

Bodily injury is rarely intended when workers engage in horseplay, but serious injuries can and do occur.

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