



GOALS

This safety session teaches employees to:

- Recognize office hazards.
- Prevent accidents and injuries on the job.

Applicable Regulations: General Duty Clause (Occupational Safety and Health Act, Section 5(a)(1)); 29 CFR 1910.22; 1910.36; 1910.37; 1910.157; 1910.305



1. Recognize and be alert to office hazards.

- Although most people think of workplace hazards in an industrial setting, the truth is that a surprising number of accidents occur each year in offices.
- Possible safety hazards in the office include:
 - Tripping and falling over loose carpet, electrical cords, objects, open drawers, etc.
 - Falls from ladders and step stools or downstairs
 - Objects falling from shelves or from the top of cabinets
 - Objects blocking fire exits or fire exits that are locked when they should be open
 - Back injuries from lifting objects improperly
 - Electric shock from overloaded circuits, damaged appliances, damaged electrical cords, etc.
 - Fire hazards from paper and other combustible materials
 - Musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs), such as carpal tunnel syndrome and back injuries.
- Be alert to hazards and correct them if you can.
 - If you can't correct a hazard, report the problem to a supervisor.

2. Take steps to prevent slips, trips, and falls.

- Make sure there are no obvious tripping hazards in your work area.
- Don't leave file cabinets or desk drawers open—even for a short time.
- If liquid spills on a noncarpeted floor, clean it up completely to avoid slipping.
- Be careful on stairways, hold on to the railing going up and down, and never leave any objects on stairs.
- Be careful when using ladders or step stools to retrieve or replace something from a high shelf—if you can't do it easily and safely, get help.
- Wear comfortable shoes with nonslip soles to help prevent slipping and tripping.

3. Beware of falling objects and collisions.

- If you see a box or other object on a shelf that looks like it could fall and hurt someone, take action—report it or correct it yourself if you can.
- Don't create obvious collision hazards—open cabinets or drawers, boxes, or furniture that is out of place.

4. Eliminate fire hazards.

- Don't overload circuits by plugging too many appliances into one outlet.
- Make sure electrical cords, including extension cords, are not damaged.



- Never use electrical items that are sparking or otherwise seem to be malfunctioning—report the problem immediately.
- Know where fire extinguishers are located and how to use them.
- Know where the emergency exits are located and how to evacuate the building safely.
- Don't block emergency exits with boxes or furniture; emergency exit doors should never be locked.

5. Prevent back injuries and other MSDs.

- Know how to lift properly—squat with your back straight, and let your legs do most of the work, not the arms or back.
- If lifting a very heavy object, such as furniture, get one or more people to help you—never try to move something that's too heavy for you.
- Be very careful when taking something down from a high place or putting something back—again, don't try if the object is too heavy for you to move easily.
- MSDs, such as carpal tunnel syndrome and other damage to wrists, arms, neck, etc., can happen as the result of long-term, repeated motions, often associated with computer use.
- Prevent MSDs by using proper posture, stretching, and taking breaks to relax tense, tired muscles.
- Know the possible symptoms of MSDs—for example, tingling or numbness—and seek medical attention if necessary.

6. Clean up housekeeping hazards.

- Many accidents occur as a result of carelessness, such as leaving things out for people to bump into or trip over, or creating a fire hazard.
- Don't be guilty of creating a safety hazard; keep your work space neat and orderly, and clean up after yourself and others.



DISCUSSION POINTS:

Talk about potential hazards in participants' work areas and strategies for preventing injuries.



CONCLUSION:

- The office may be more hazardous than you imagine.
- Like any work space, offices can harbor hazards. You can prevent injuries if you identify hazards and eliminate or report them.



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE:

Have your employees take the Guide to Office Safety quiz. By testing their knowledge, you can judge their ability to keep safe in the office and whether they need to review this important topic again soon.



GUIDE TO OFFICE SAFETY QUIZ

1. **Accidents caused by safety hazards can occur in offices as well as in industrial work areas.**
a. True b. False
2. **Office hazards may include:**
a. Slips, trips, and falls
b. Musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs)
c. Both a and b
3. **If you see a spill on a noncarpeted floor, clean it up whether or not you put it there.**
a. True b. False
4. **Hold on to the railing going upstairs and downstairs.**
a. True b. False
5. **Which of these could cause a trip and fall?**
a. Box on a high shelf
b. Open file drawer
c. Either a or b
6. **Know where emergency exits and fire extinguishers are located.**
a. True b. False
7. **Lift with your:**
a. Back muscles
b. Leg muscles
c. Neck muscles
8. **A good way to prevent MSDs is to:**
a. Take breaks.
b. Stretch.
c. Both a and b.
9. **Keeping your work space neat and orderly can help prevent accidents.**
a. True b. False
10. **In front of an emergency exit is a good place to put a file cabinet, since you never use the door, and it's just wasted space.**
a. True b. False

When you have completed this quiz, turn it in to your supervisor.

Name: _____

Date: _____



ANSWERS TO GUIDE TO OFFICE SAFETY QUIZ

1. a. True. A surprising number of accidents and injuries happen in offices. Look around for hazards, and eliminate or report any you find.
2. c. Both of these are potential office hazards.
3. a. True. Someone else might come along, not see it, and slip and fall.
4. a. True. This can help prevent falls.
5. b. Someone could trip over an open file or desk drawer he or she doesn't notice. Keep drawers closed when not in use.
6. a. True. Make sure you know emergency procedures.
7. b. To prevent back injuries when lifting, squat, keep your back straight, and lift with your legs rather than with your back muscles.
8. c. Both of these are effective strategies for preventing MSDs. Also, maintain proper posture while working.
9. a. True. Good housekeeping is an important way to prevent office hazards.
10. b. False. Never block an emergency exit.