

MSU-ES Dawg Tracks



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Safety Tips: Office Safety



Did you know that 25 percent of all office injuries are from falls? One-third of the falls are from women wearing high heel shoes. Other hazards that cause falls are torn carpet, exposed carpet seams, electrical cords running across the floor, spills on floors, open desks or file drawers, waste baskets in walkways, and boxes or supplies stacked in walkways. Any of these items will cause you to trip and fall if you encounter them in the wrong way.

Do you have stairs in your office? Many offices have stairs and these, if we aren't focused, will cause us to trip and fall. Falls on stairs cause 33,000 disabling injuries each year. About two-thirds of the employees falling on stairs didn't have handrails to use. Many of the victims were carrying packages or other objects while negotiating the stairs. Staircase accidents are usually pretty serious – 80 percent result in lost time workdays.

Following are some various tips we want to discuss with you that will help in dealing with safety issues in your office:

FALLS –

- Always use a ladder or stepstool to reach above shoulder level. (My neighbor learned this the hard way, using a swivel breakfast chair for a ladder and did a 360° on the kitchen floor with a broken arm and collarbone.) Ladders and stepstools should be sturdy with no broken rungs.
- Be careful to not lean back too far in your chair. You might do an acrobatic flip with no control of the results.
- Keep all pathways clear.
- Secure all electrical cords crossing your path with strip covers.
- Avoid excessive bending, twisting and leaning backward in your chair.

FILING CABINETS / BOOKCASES –

- Always fill file cabinets from the bottom up to prevent the cabinet from tilting over from being top heavy.
- Always return the drawers to their closed position to prevent bumping and tripping. Avoid opening more than one drawer at a time.
- It's a good idea to try to locate files and bookcases out of the normal traffic pattern.
- For cabinets taller than 64 inches, securing them to a wall prevents them from toppling over.

FIRE SAFETY –

- Every office should have an evacuation plan posted and practice at least one evacuation drill each year. An established collection point should be designated to go with the evacuation plan.
- Office doors and pathways should always be clear of any obstructions that would hinder egress.
- New employees should be oriented in the evacuation procedures.
- All employees should be aware of flammable materials in the office, such as paper products, white-out, glue, and cleaning solvents.
- Fire equipment, fire extinguishers, fire door exits, and sprinkler heads (where installed), should remain unobstructed. Materials should be stored to leave 18 inches clearance around sprinkler heads.

ELECTRICAL EQUIPMENT –

- Periodic checks for electrical cords should be made to look for damaged cords and plugs, damaged wall outlet and receptacle covers. Never plug an extension cord into another extension cord or another power strip.
- Be careful to avoid handling or storing liquids around electrical equipment, which if spilled can cause electrocution or equipment malfunction.
- Keep all circuit boxes clear of any obstruction so that you have fast and easy access to them. All doors in electrical boxes should always remain closed to prevent an electrical flashover in case of an electrical malfunction.

LIFTING –

- When you prepare to lift - take a balanced stance with your feet apart (the width of your shoulders). Squat to lift with the load as close to you as possible.
- Keep your back straight with your chin tucked to create a straight line with your back.
- Grip the load with your full hands (not just finger tips), keeping the load close to your body, with elbows close to your body to help keep the load balanced and your body weight centered.
- Avoid twisting when lifting, if needed; turn your whole body, feet first.
- Check your route of egress, never carry a load blinding you.