

Office Alive With Hazards

A SAFETY TALK FOR DISCUSSION LEADERS

This safety talk is designed for discussion leaders to use in preparing safety meetings.

Set a specific time and date for your safety meeting. Publicize your meeting so everyone involved will be sure to attend.

Review this safety talk before the meeting and become familiar with its content. Make notes about the points made in this talk that pertain to your workplace. You should be able to present the material in your own words and lead the discussion without reading it.

Seating space is not absolutely necessary, but arrangements should be made so that those attending can easily see and hear the presentation.

Collect whatever materials and props you will need ahead of time. Try to use equipment in your workplace to demonstrate your points.

DURING THE MEETING

Give the safety talk in your own words. Use the printed talk merely as a guide.

The purpose of a safety meeting is to initiate discussion of safety problems and provide solutions to those problems. Encourage employees to discuss hazards or potential hazards they encounter on the job. Ask them to suggest ways to improve safety in their area.

Don't let the meeting turn into a gripe session about unrelated topics. As discussion leader, it's your job to make sure the topic is safety. Discussing other topics wastes time and can ruin the effectiveness of your safety meeting.

At the end of the meeting, ask employees to sign a sheet on the back of this talk as a record that they attended the safety meeting. Keep this talk on file for your records.

Office Alive With Hazards

When we think of workplace safety, we usually see a worker dressed in coveralls wearing a hard hat, safety glasses and other assorted safety equipment. That worker is usually surrounded by all types of heavy equipment and machines or related obvious hazards. But what about the not-so-obvious hazards that may occur in other areas?

We seem to think accidents that happen on the shop floor will magically disappear at the office door. However, we all know that is not true. It is not unusual to hear of office workers tripping over a typewriter cord, pulling a telephone down on their big toe or straining a muscle trying to move or lift a heavy piece of office equipment.

The office environment does have its share of potential problems, but many of these problems can be eliminated by following good office-safety practices.

Office traffic:

- Wet floors may be slippery, so avoid walking on them.
- Walk--never run.
- Passageways should be kept clear of tripping hazards such as wastebaskets, cartons, electric cords, open drawers, ladders and personal belongings.
- Torn carpets, loose or curled mats? liquids spilled on floors, light failures or any other condition that could cause tripping or slipping should be reported immediately to your supervisor.

Stairways:

- Use hand_rails. Take one step at a time, keep to the right and do not hurry.
- Do not store or throw anything on steps or stairways. Even a piece of paper, a paper clip, a cellophane wrapper or a match can create a slipping hazard.

Elevators:

- Walk--do not run--for an elevator.
- Watch your step when entering or leaving your car because the car may not be completely level with the ground when the doors open.
- Do not attempt to stop automatic elevators with your hand. Wait for the next elevator.

File cabinets:

- File drawers as well as desk and cabinet drawers should be closed when not in use.
- Files should be placed far enough away from doors or passageways so they do not interfere with exit routes.
- Place the heaviest load in the lower drawers.
- Open only one file drawer at a time.
- When shutting a drawer, grasp the handle to avoid finger injuries.

Paper:

- Use caution when folding or handling paper--it can cut.
- Use paper clips or staples to fasten papers together. Be sure staples are fully closed.
- Use a staple remover to remove staples.

Smoking:

- Place cigarettes or cigars well inside of ashtrays so that as they burn down they will not fall out.
- Never lay cigarettes or cigars on desks, in wastebaskets or on the floor. A wastebasket is the worst possible substitute for an ashtray; even extinguished matches and tobacco are often hot enough to ignite other materials.
- When you leave your office, extinguish cigarettes and cigars in an ashtray.
- Smoking should not be permitted near flammable liquids, such as mineral spirit duplicating machines.

Electrical equipment:

- Electrical outlets should be located so that cords do not cross aisles or passageways.
- Electrical equipment should be properly grounded to prevent shock.
- Electrical devices should be periodically inspected for safety. Damaged or worn electrical cords should be replaced without delay.
- Never tamper with electrical equipment.

Machines and equipment:

- Machines with exposed moving parts must have appropriate guards.
- Do not operate a machine until you are properly trained. If you operate a machine, dress suitably for the job. Loose sleeves, neckties, even long hair, can get caught in moving machinery.
- Properly constructed paper cutters in good condition require common-sense precautions. Keep your fingers away from the knife when it comes down. Keep the knife in the down position when not in use. Loose guards or springs should be repaired immediately.
- When using or refilling staplers, keep your fingers away from the operating part.
- Typewriters should be securely mounted so they do not "crawl" because of the vibration. On a sidewall desk, be certain that the typewriter shelf is firmly supported when the typewriter is in use.

Storage:

- Use a suitable ladder or platform for reaching high objects. Do not stand on a chair, carton or other substitute.
- Heavy objects should be stored near floor level.
- Anything worth keeping should be stored in an appropriate place. Store materials in cabinets or rooms designed for this purpose, and keep them orderly.
- Knives and scrapers should be sheathed before being placed in drawers. Razor blades should not be used as substitutes.
- Pointed objects, such as scissors, should face away from you.
- In general, flammable liquids and paints should not be stored in office areas. Flammable liquids necessary for various document-reproduction methods should be limited in quantities and must be stored in approved metal containers and kept away from heat.
- Paint-soaked or oily cloths should be stored in a metal container with a self-closing cover.

Housekeeping:

- Good housekeeping should be emphasized as a vital safety and health measure.

Pedestrians:

- If your job calls for travel on plant roadways, be especially alert for vehicle traffic. When leaving a building, look both ways before entering the roadway.
- Always walk to the side of the road. Walk--do not run.
- Round blind corners cautiously. Obey barricades and caution signs.
- Remember, a backing vehicle has obstructed vision.
- Do not jump from loading docks, platforms or other elevations.

Miscellaneous:

- Turn on the lights before entering a dark room or corridor. Report locations that are inadequately lighted.
- To avoid falling, do not tilt back in a straight chair, do not lean back too far in a swivel chair and do not overreach.
- Do not lift beyond your strength. When heavy items are to be moved, arrange for necessary help and proper trucks or other material-handling equipment. If an object to be handled may cause cuts or splinters, wear gloves.
- All sharp edges, splinters, slivers and burrs on furniture or equipment should be removed promptly. Protruding nails should be removed or turned down.
- Do not carry pencils behind your ear or between your fingers with the point toward the palm of your hand.
- Do not remain at your desk or workplace when overhead work is being performed.
- Horseplay can cause injury and should not be tolerated.
- If work assignments require you to enter plant areas, be certain that you wear eye protection and any other protective equipment required.

NOTE TO DISCUSSION LEADER:

At this time you may want to ask if there are other office hazards that have not been discussed.