

February 2014

Avoiding Work-
place Hazards

Poster of the Month

Slips, Trips and
Falls



These practical sugges-
tions may save you from
serious injury during a fall.

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Hazard Communications

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UC Safety Spotlight

A UC System-Wide Publication of the Environment, Health & Safety Leadership Council



It is fairly obvious that safety and health hazards can exist on worksites filled with heavy machinery and equipment, where employees often are required to engage in strenuous manual labor.

A job where most of the work tasks are completed while sitting in a chair in a climate-controlled office building would seem less fraught with danger. However, a surprising number of hazards can be present in an office setting.

According to data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, 80,410 private-industry office and administrative workers suffered on-the-job injuries in 2008. Many of these injuries could have been prevented had workers or supervisors recognized the risks and implemented simple workplace modifications to help mitigate them.

Here are 25 steps you can take to reduce the risk of injury among your office staff.



Slips, trips and falls, the most common type of office injury, sidelined 25,790 workers in 2008, according to BLS. The National Safety Council says employees are 2.5 times more likely to suffer a disabling fall in an office setting than anywhere else. Several hazards contribute to these injuries, although most can be significantly reduced, often by raising awareness among employees.

1. **Stay clutter-free:** Boxes, files and various items piled in walkways can create a tripping hazard, according to OSHA.
2. **Step on up:** Standing on chairs – particularly rolling office chairs – is a significant fall hazard. Workers who need to reach something at an elevated height should use a stepladder.
3. **Maintain a clear line of vision:** Workers can collide when making turns in the hallways and around blind corners or cubicle walls.
4. **Get a grip:** Carpeting and other skid-resistant surfaces can serve to reduce falls.

PPE (Personal Protective Equipment)



Personal protective equipment is equipment worn to minimize exposure to a variety of hazards. Examples of PPE include such items as lab coats, gloves, foot protection (steel-toed shoes), eye protection (safety glasses or goggles), protective hearing devices (ear-plugs, muffs), hard hats, respirators, fall protection harnesses, etc.

Did you know?

The PPE Distribution events at the campuses include almost 10,000 face shields, over 115,000 lab coats and over 135,000 pairs of protective eyewear.

Upcoming Distribution Events:

UC Davis	2/10-2/14
UCSB	2/11-2/13
UCDMC	2/18-2/19
UCB	2/24-2/27
UCLA	3/4-3/7
UCI	TBD
UCSF	TBD



Struck/caught by

Another major type of injury in the office setting comes from workers being struck by or caught by an object. Incidents of this nature accounted for 15,680 injuries in 2008, according to BLS.

5. Shut the drawer: File cabinets with too many fully extended drawers could tip over if they are not secured.
6. Safe stacking: Proper storage of heavy items can help reduce the number of office injuries.

Ergonomics Injuries

Perhaps the most prevalent injuries in an office setting are related to ergonomics. Because office workers spend the bulk of their day seated at a desk and working on a computer, they are prone to strains and other injuries related to posture and repetitive movement. Ergonomics hazards can be difficult to detect.

7. Provide adjustable equipment: Although employers may be reluctant to pay for expensive ergonomic equipment, experts insist the equipment is a wise investment
8. Train workers on how to use equipment: Train workers on both the ideal setup and how to operate adjustable equipment accordingly.
9. Keep your feet on the floor: Unless an employee's feet are on the floor, a chair will not be able to reduce pain and discomfort. Although footrests are a "second-best option," their small surface may impede some of the worker's movement.
10. Provide document holders: Frequently typing from hard copy can lead to neck strain if a worker is forced to repeatedly look down to the desk and back to the computer screen. Keeping reference materials close to the monitor reduces the need for your eyes to change focus as you look from the document to the monitor.
11. Correct mouse placement: The mouse should always be placed beside the keyboard.

Vision Problems

Although looking at a computer monitor cannot damage your eyes, spending a large portion of your workday at the computer can cause eyestrain, according to Chicago-based Prevent Blindness America. Eyes can become dry and irritated, and workers may begin having trouble focusing. A few work area adjustments can help alleviate some of these issues.

12. Dim the lights and use task lamps: Florescent lights in office buildings often are too bright for optimal vision. According to the American Optometric Association, light that is at about half-normal office levels is preferred.
13. Correctly position monitors: Prevent Blindness America and ergonomists recommends workers place their computer monitors slightly below eye level and 20-26 inches from their eyes.
14. Minimize screen glare: To minimize strain, position your monitor at a 90-degree angle from a window or natural light source, or be sure to always close shades or blinds. A glare reduction filter also can be used.
15. Wear the right glasses: Computer glasses are a good alternative to bifocals or progressive lenses while working on the computer. Computer glasses allow the wearer to view the full screen without having to extend or tilt the head back and strain the neck.
16. Increase font size on computer: A simple adjustment to the font size on the computer screen can eliminate the need for this.
17. Take a break: Giving your eyes a rest and allowing them to focus on things at varying distances can help reduce strain and fatigue. Try the 20/20/20 rule: Every 20 minutes, focus on something 20 feet away, for 20 seconds.

Hazard Communication

Employers are required, by the California Occupational Safety and Health Administration, to inform their workers about hazardous chemicals they may be exposed to. Hazard Communication standard: <https://www.dir.ca.gov/title8/5194-May-6-2013.html>, CCR, Title 8, §5194.

This applies to industrial (non-laboratory) workplaces and activities, which includes shops, operations, maintenance, custodial, craft centers, theaters, studios, etc.

The program ensures that employees:

- Understand hazards associated with chemicals they work with through labeling and other forms of warning
- Provide access to [Safety Data Sheets](#) (formerly called Material Safety Data Sheets) and other risk assessment resources
- Receive safety training about how to minimize the risks associated with the hazardous materials they use, including [personal protective equipment](#) (PPE)



Fire Safety

Routine inspections around the office can help reduce the likelihood of fire causing devastation.

18. Maintain cords in good repair: According to the Office of Compliance, damaged and ungrounded power cords pose a serious fire hazard and violate safety codes.
19. Inspect space heaters: If your employer allows the use of personal space heaters, verify the devices are approved for commercial use and have a switch that automatically shuts off the heater if the heater is tipped over.
20. Never block fire sprinklers: Furniture and tall stacks of materials can block the range of fire sprinklers, reducing their effectiveness in the event of an emergency.
21. Do not block escape routes or prop open fire doors: Items never should be stored, even temporarily, along an emergency exit route.

Administrative

In addition to employee training and improved equipment, certain administrative controls can aid hazard recognition and the elimination of potentially dangerous situations.

22. Conduct walk-throughs and report problems: Periodically walking around the office can help with hazard recognition and maintenance of ergonomic task design. Be sure to report any problems to the building manager.
23. Monitor signs of musculoskeletal disorders: Recognizing the symptoms of musculoskeletal disorders can alert employees of the need to make an ergonomics alteration to their workstation.
24. Talk to employees about their concerns: Simply asking workers how they are feeling can go a long way toward recognizing hazards.
25. Establish employee reporting systems: Establishing an employee reporting system can be the best way for organizations to get a handle on potential hazards before they cause injury.

<http://www.safetyandhealthmagazine.com>

Workplace Violence

In most workplaces where risk factors can be identified, the risk of assault can be prevented or minimized if employers take appropriate precautions. One of the best protections employers can offer their workers is to establish a zero-tolerance policy toward workplace violence. This policy should cover all workers, patients, clients, visitors, contractors, and anyone else who may come in contact with company personnel.

By assessing their worksites, employers can identify methods for reducing the likelihood of incidents occurring. OSHA believes that a well written and implemented Workplace Violence Prevention Program, combined with engineering controls, administrative controls and training can reduce the incidence of workplace violence in both the private sector and Federal workplaces.

This can be a separate workplace violence prevention program or can be incorporated into an injury and illness prevention program, employee handbook, or manual of standard operating procedures. It is critical to ensure that all workers know the policy and understand that all claims of workplace violence will be investigated and remedied promptly. In addition, OSHA encourages employers to develop additional methods as necessary to protect employees in high risk industries.

<https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/workplaceviolence/>

<http://www.dol.gov/>

Shoes for Crews

The goal of this program is to provide high quality highly slip-resistant “Shoes for Crews” (SFC) shoes at no cost to host departments to all food service workers, and optionally to custodial staff and other workers with high slip-hazard work, at a frequency of every 6-months during their employment at any UC campus / hospital / field station.

UCOP Risk Management implemented the UC system-wide SFC slip-resistant shoe program initially for food service and custodial employees with the goal of reducing the frequency and cost of slip and fall injuries by 50% in these job classifications.

By implementing this program in these indoor high-hazard slip/trip/fall job classifications, pilot studies have already demonstrated a 5-fold reduction in slip/fall injuries with comparable payback to operations throughout the system.

The program has been broadened to include other workers in high slip-hazard work environments on a department job-class-by-job-class basis with review and approval for inclusion in the SFC program by each campus’ EH&S SFC representative.

Learn more about the [Shoes for Crews Program](#) (pdf).



Hearing Protective Equipment

Supervisors are responsible for:

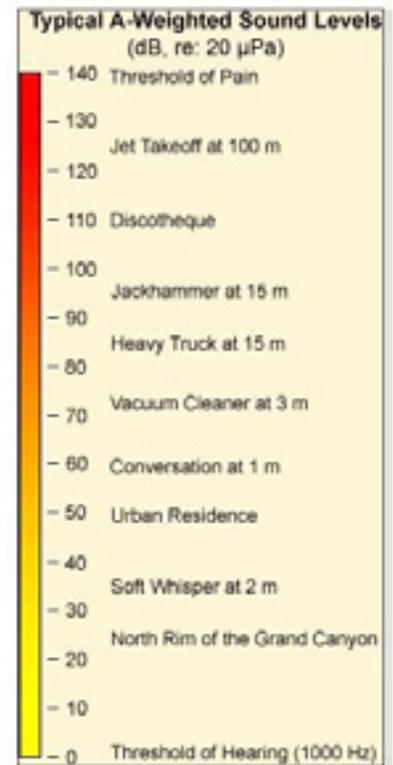
- Supervisors are required to assess the workplace to determine if hazards are present or likely to be present that necessitate the use of PPE, provide employees with appropriate PPE and training, and require them to use and maintain it.

Departments are responsible for:

- Providing hearing protective equipment to employees who are exposed to noise at or above 85 dB(A) averaged out over an 8-hour workday, and for anyone who enters an area designated as “hearing protection required.”
- Paying for hearing protectors
- Replacing hearing protectors if they are broken, defective, or unsanitary
- Giving employees a choice between at least 2 brands of hearing protectors

Types of hearing protectors:

- Aural protectors, sometimes called inserts, are plug-type protectors placed directly into the ear canal.
- Circumaural protectors (muffs) are plastic domes that cover the ears and are connected with a spring band that fits on top of the head.
- Superaural protectors (canal caps) seal the external opening to the ear canal. Audiologists fit and order canal caps.



Stay Healthy: Avoid the Flu

Flu season has not only arrived but, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the flu has reached epidemic proportions in the United States.

The California flu season is in full swing, although it is not expected to peak until some time next month. There is an increase in reported cases, and local reports of H1N1 (swine flu) are also on the rise.

You can help prevent the spread of illness — whether it’s a basic cold or full-on flu — by incorporating a few simple steps into your daily routine. These include frequent and thorough hand washing, using hand sanitizer, covering your nose and mouth when you sneeze or cough, getting vaccinated and, if you do get sick, avoiding contact with others.

Remember that you may have and pass on the flu even before you have symptoms. According to the CDC, symptoms begin one to four days after the virus enters the body; and healthy adults can infect others beginning one day before symptoms develop and up to seven days after becoming sick.

It’s not too late to get vaccinated. Talk to your primary care physician to schedule an appointment or check with your local pharmacy. Most pharmacies provide this service on a walk-in basis, and many medical plans reimburse for the expense. Check the CDC’s information on the 2013–14 seasonal flu vaccine.

Careless Chris

Careless Chris Conquers the World of Workplace Hazards ...an Imaginary Scenario



Careless Chris paced back and forth in front of the custodial closet on the second floor of the health center, impatiently scanning the hallway for his partner. Chris was looking forward to the night's shift with great anticipation; he had a feeling that tonight would be the night when everything came together at last...

[Read the story](#)

Feedback, Please

Send an email to safetyspotlight@ucdavis.edu to submit your comments on the February 2014 issue or to suggest content ideas for future issues. We look forward to hearing from you!

COMING SOON!

Shop, Tool & Electrical Safety



Check out our March 2014 issue to learn how to stay safe in your work environment and how to prevent injuries in your workplace.

connect

Know where to turn on your UC campus for the information you need to keep yourself, your workplace and your environment safe and secure. Click on the campus links below to connect to local program, educational and informational resources.

[UC Berkeley](#)

[UC Riverside](#)

[UCOP](#)

[UC Davis](#)

[UC San Diego](#)

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[UC Irvine](#)

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CtrlWORK

Did you know that

.....taking regular breaks during work saves you significant time by improving concentration?

.....CtrlWORK has been developed to assist you in this process in the most friendly way?

.....CtrlWORK entails a full time management course?

.....If you have worked for 2 hours without doing other tasks for 10 minutes, it is time for a time-out to restore your concentration and comfort. CtrlWORK takes into account the time not doing computer use in the past interval.

.....CtrlWORK is available to all UC employees!

CtrlWORK is a break and personal efficiency program for all UC employees (PC users). It provides constructive interventions to maintain concentration. The software features tools and tips on e-mail and time management, and Windows shortcut keys called Energizers and Concentration Boosts. You can tailor the settings of the program to your work patterns with automatic setting recommendations. You can choose the choice of content and amount of interventions displayed. CtrlWORK will provide you with feedback on work habits and recommendations to work more efficiently.

Contact your department's IT staff for technical questions about downloading CtrlWORK.

