

Safety Sheet 15 – Office Hazard

Consult the *Ontario Occupational Health and Safety Act* and its *Regulations*, as well as the relevant CSA Standard “*Guideline on Office Ergonomics*” ([Z412-00 R.2005](#)) for detailed information on office safety.

Health & safety hazards can often be overlooked in the office environment. Accidents can be just as serious in the office as they can be in the field – real hazards, such as sprains, strains, and cuts can occur frequently when proper care is not exercised within your working environment. Vigilance on the part of all office staff is required in order to eliminate hazards such as open drawers, swinging windows and doors, garbage, along with other independent hazards. Ensure that any damaged equipment or problems are reported immediately to the appropriate authority (supervisor, Protection Services, 2222 or other as the case may require)

General

- Keep your office well-organized and tidy with adequate room to move around
- Remove unused / unwanted items
- Prevent tripping hazards
 - Do not use extension cords for permanent wiring
 - Ensure your access is free from tripping hazards
 - File documents regularly and remove empty boxes; prevent items from accumulating in your workspace area

Electrical Hazards

- Visually inspect common electrical equipment, such as computer wiring and phone cords for flaws
- Only keep required electrical equipment (e.g. remove cell phone chargers, extra fans, coffee pots, heaters etc.)
- Use only electrical equipment which is CSA approved or its equivalent (this includes power bar)
- Extension cord is only for temporarily use
- Do not overload an outlet
- Do not use plug splitters
- Do not plug a power bar or extension cord in series

Physical Hazards

- Lighting – keep it adequate for the task; avoid creating shadows, glare, and reflection
- Lifting – use appropriate techniques and move the item close to your body – ask for assistance if necessary. For heavy and large tasks, contact 2222
- Shelving and hanging cabinets – ensure that:
 - It is not overloaded – verify the maximum load (including the actual weight of the cabinet / bookcase)
 - It is not tilting / leaning / overloaded on one side

- It is strongly secured to prevent from falling (eg. to wall, to floor, other filing shelf / cabinet) – if not contact 2222
- Bottom shelves are filled first – this prevents the shelf from tipping because it is bottom-heavy – be sure to instruct all staff and users
- The unit is in good working condition (type of material, condition, manufacturer defects)
- Filing cabinets and bookcases – ensure that:
 - It is strongly secured to prevent from falling (eg. to wall, to floor, other filing cabinet) – if not contact 2222
 - It is not tilting or leaning to one side
 - Only one drawer can be opened at a time
 - Shelves do not fall out / off of the unit
 - Bottom drawers are filled first – this prevents the cabinet from tipping because it is bottom-heavy – be sure to instruct all staff and users
 - The unit is in good working condition (type of material, condition, manufacturer defects)

Chemical Hazards

- Ensure that any chemicals are properly transported, used, labeled and stored
- Know the chemical properties (WHMIS legislation; Material Safety Data Sheets)
- Be aware of emergency procedures and personal protective equipment required.

Ergonomic Hazards

- Ensure your work space is properly set-up to prevent musculoskeletal injuries (for example: Repetitive Strains Injuries (RSI); Cumulative Trauma Disorders (CTD); Tendonitis; Carpel Tunnel Syndrome)

Prevention

- Conduct an office inspection in yours or a co-worker's office. Ensure that it is documented.

Should you have any questions or concerns about the hazards in your office, please feel free to contact the Office of Risk Management at 613-562-5892 or at safety@uottawa.ca.