

# OFFICE SAFETY

**Oklahoma State University**  
*Environmental Health & Safety*

University Health Services, Suite 002 Stillwater, Oklahoma 74078 405.744.7241



**Greg Hogan**  
**Oklahoma State University**  
**Environmental Health and Safety**  
**405-744-7241**

# OBJECTIVE

Recognize potential hazards in office environments and learn to eliminate these hazards.



# Introduction

Office environments are generally a safe and healthy place to work, however, even without the extreme hazards of other industries, offices can still pose a unique group of hazardous conditions. These hazards often result from ergonomic issues, poorly designed office environments, vision problems and general ambiance. By knowing the potential hazards in your work environment, you can help protect your health, safety and well being.



**"Oh, it was just like any other day at work.  
Except for the part where I sneezed  
by the paper shredder."**

# Office Safety: Best Practices

- Good housekeeping is essential.
- Never leave desk or cabinet drawers open.
- Never use chairs or desks to reach an overhead item.
- Use safe lifting practices. Bend your knees and lift with your legs.
- Ensure your computer is in a position that will eliminate eye strain.
- Always know your exit path in case of emergency.

# Office Ergonomics:

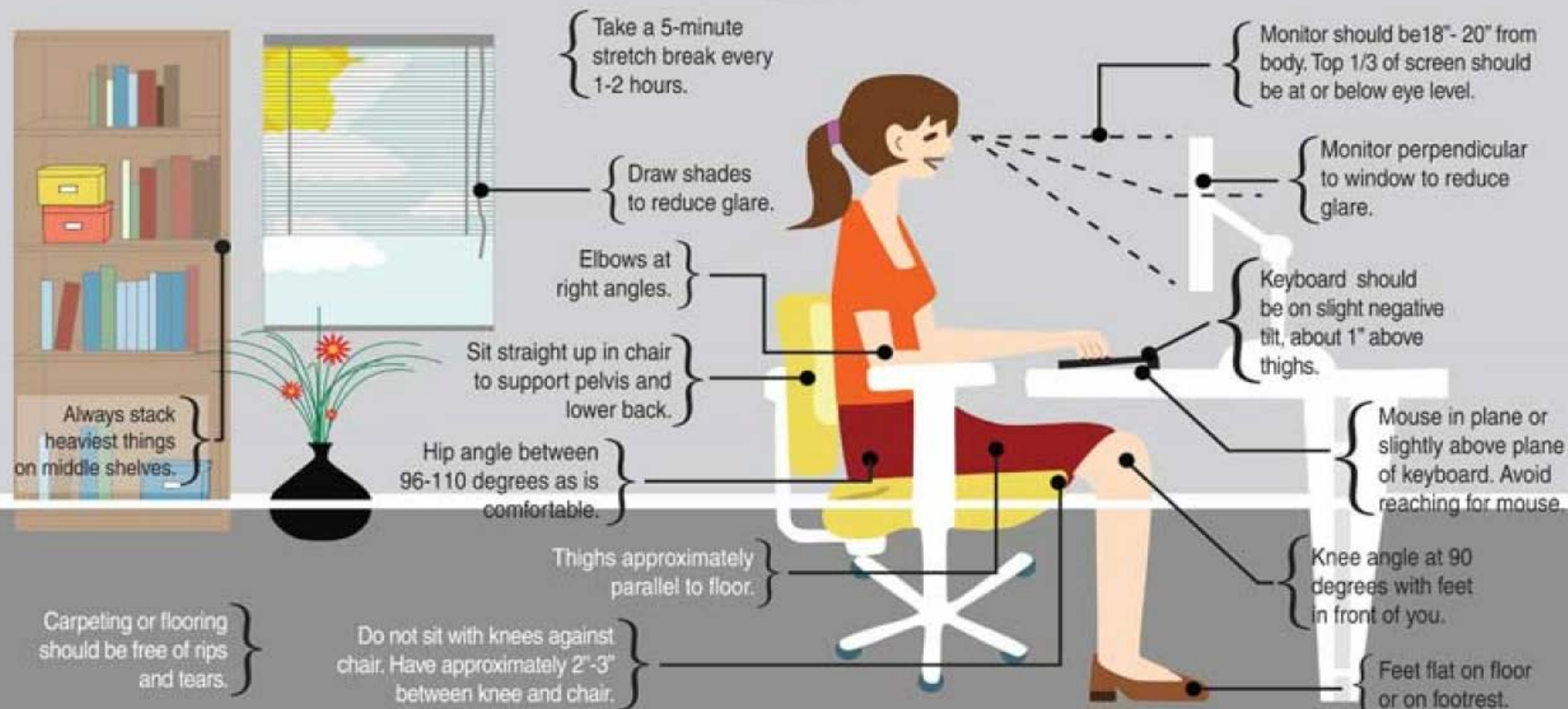
Design factors, as for the workplace, intended to maximize productivity by minimizing operator fatigue and discomfort.

- Workstations should be designed to reduce excessive bending and stretching.
- Office furniture should be fully adjustable, to accommodate any employee.
- Chairs should support the lower back and an adjustable height.
- Computer monitors should be placed directly in front of the user, with the top of the monitor at eye level to avoid neck strain.
- Keyboards should be elevated in the back, to keep wrists in a neutral position.



# Your Body at Work: **Make Yourself Comfortable**

Everyone's ergonomic needs are different, if you experience any problems you should report these to your supervisor.



# Avoiding Eye Strain

In an office setting, your eyes are at risk of becoming strained from looking at computer screens for a long period of time. Use these tips to help prevent future eye problems.

## 6 Tips To Relieve Eye Strain



- ① Reposition terminal, try a glare filter, or modify lighting to reduce glare.
- ② Blink your eyes often and take a break by alternating tasks when necessary.
- ③ Lean your elbows on your desk. Cup your hands and place them lightly over your closed eyes. Hold for a minute, while breathing deeply in and out. Slowly uncover your eyes.
- ④ Close your eyes and slowly roll your eyeballs clockwise all the way around counter-clockwise. Repeat 3 times.
- ⑤ Every half hour, look away from the computer screen. Focus on an object at least 20 feet away. Look back at the screen, then look away and focus again. Repeat 3 times.
- ⑥ Place reference materials as close as possible to the screen to avoid frequent head movements.

## Safety Tips on

# Lifting & Moving

- 1** Check the weight to be sure that you are comfortable with the lift. Do not lift anything you think is too heavy!
- 2** Use handles, handholds, or cutouts, if available.

- 3** Use carts with large wheels. A larger wheel rolls easily and requires less force over door thresholds, elevator gaps, etc. Small wheels get caught on holes and other floor irregularities.



- 4** Bend your knees and, with your back straight, lift the load with a good grip, and keep the load close to the body. Do not lift and twist.



- 5** Get help and coordinate the move with your partner.



- 6** Use lift assist equipment or devices whenever possible.



Rolling Cart



Harness



Electric Pallet Jack

# Back Safety

- Avoid lifting if you can. Utilize hand trucks or rolling carts for heavy objects.
- Keep heavy objects off of the floor, to reduce bending.
- Test the weight of an object before lifting, and enlist help if the object is too heavy.
- Plan the lift prior to lifting. Determine where you are moving the object.
- Bend at the knees and keep a straight back, carrying the load between the shoulder and waist.



# Slips, trips and falls.

Prevention techniques:

- Ensure electrical cords are out of areas of travel.
- Clean any spills immediately, or mark with appropriate signage until the spill is cleaned.
- Do not block passageways.
- Keep office areas free of clutter.
- Watch where you walk; look for loose carpet, broken stair edges and other tripping hazards.
- When using stairs, do not carry large loads that could obstruct your vision.
- Report any potential safety hazards immediately, to prevent other accidents.

# Preventing Slips, Trips & Falls

## KNOW THE RISKS

Slips and trips are two of the most frequent causes of injury in the workplace and cost employers millions every year. However, the majority of accidents caused by slips and trips can be easily avoided by following a few simple guidelines.

By following the principles set out in this poster, you can ensure that your workplace is free from slip and trip hazards and that accidents are kept to a minimum.



## 1. HAZARD - SPILLAGES

### Spillages

Clean spills up at once. Remember that the cleaning agent needed will depend on the nature of the spill. If the floor remains wet after the spill has been cleaned, make sure people are aware of this by using appropriate signs. Arrange a diverted route that avoids the area if necessary.



## 2. HAZARD - CABLES

### Cables

Try to make sure that cables do not cross walkways. Use cable curbs and tunnels to prevent trips if necessary.



## 3. HAZARD - OBSTRUCTIONS

### Obstructions

Permanent obstructions and any objects left lying around can easily create a trip hazard if they are not seen. Keep work areas clear of obstructions. If this is not possible, use appropriate signs or barriers to make people aware of hazards.



## 4. HAZARD - FLOORING

### Flooring

Look for any cracks, holes or uneven wear etc that may cause a trip hazard. If the floor regularly becomes wet or slippery through working procedures, consider how this can be contained or prevented.



## 5. HAZARD - FOOTWEAR

### Footwear

Choice of footwear can be crucial in preventing slips and trips. If special footwear is needed to ensure the safety of employees, the employer must provide it.



## 6. HAZARD - LIGHTING

### Lighting

Lighting should be adequate enough to enable people to see obstructions and hazards. Ensure that faulty lights are replaced and dirty lights are cleaned before levels become too low for people to work in safety.



## 7. PREVENTING ACCIDENTS

An effective management system will enable you to:

- Ascertain any slip and trip problems.
- Identify the best course of action.
- Execute your chosen course of action.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of your precautions.

You should try to incorporate the following steps into your system:

1. Ask which areas of your workplace contain slip and trip hazards and devise a strategy for improvement. Minimise slip and trip hazards through effective equipment and working procedures.
2. Make sure workers are aware of slip and trip risks and are committed to minimising them. Give people safety responsibilities. Ensure a record is kept of who is responsible for what.
3. Carry out regular checks to ensure that any safety procedures are being carried out properly. Keep a record of cleaning and maintenance work.
4. Review the approach to slip and trip issues on a regular basis and examine accident reports.



# Office Environment

- Office layout should incorporate work flow, safety and health and convenience.
- Offices should provide adequate room for employees to enter and exit, especially in the event of an emergency.
- Sometimes illumination in your office can be inadequate or interfere with your vision, ensure this doesn't happen by keeping illumination levels consistent, and avoiding sources of glare.
- Never run in office areas, and keep to the right while walking in passageways.
- Employees should remain clear of doors and stand away from the door swinging path.

# Noise

Noise in office settings is generally not hazardous, but distracting and may interfere with your work. Here are some things to remember to help reduce noise:

- Keep noisy items away from areas that employees use phones, or require a quiet atmosphere.
- Schedule noisy activities at times that will have less of an effect on other employees.
- Ensure all mechanical equipment is maintained to prevent any loose parts from making noise or squeaking.
- Refer to the chart to see if you may have any noise in your office that could be hazardous.

**85dB** Prolonged exposure to any noise at or above this level can cause hearing loss

**110db** Regular exposure of more than 1 minute risks permanent hearing loss

Eardrum Perforation Possible	160	Pistol shot
	150	Fireworks display
Painful Acoustic Trauma	140	Shotgun blast
Painfully Loud	130	Jet engine 25m away, motor racing
	120	Rock concert, thunder
Extremely Loud	110	Car horn, snowblower, Pneumatic Hammer
	100	Blow dryer, subway, helicopter, chainsaw
PROTECT YOUR EARS	90	Motorcycle, lawn mower, convertible ride on highway
Very Loud	80	Factory, noisy restaurant, vacuum, screaming child
Loud	70	Car, alarm clock, city traffic
	60	Conversation, dishwasher
Moderate	50	Moderate rainfall
Faint	40	Refrigerator
	30	Whisper, library
	20	Watch ticking
	dB levels	

# Electrical Hazards

- Do not overload sockets, ask for additional outlets to be installed.
- If any cables become warm to the touch, this could indicate a fire hazard. Unplug and report the issue.
- Replace damaged or frayed electrical cords.
- Cables should never be ran under carpet or rugs, or in walkways.
- Never use an extension cord in an area permanently. Extension cords are designed for temporary use.
- Never “daisy-chain” extension cords. See picture for reference.



# Indoor Air Quality

Indoor air quality is the study of pollutant levels within the office environment. Often, health symptoms associated with indoor air quality are vague and similar to symptoms that can occur from conditions at home. Usually, contaminants levels are far too low to require occupational evaluation, however, if you are concerned about the contaminant levels in your office, take a look at some of the factors that may require further investigation:

- Office plans changing to accommodate more employees.
- Building renovations, such as installation of new carpet, and painting.
- Blocked air vents.
- Water leaks / spills that could lead to mold growth.
- Improper waste disposal.

# Housekeeping

Good housekeeping is an important element of accident prevention in offices.

Poor housekeeping may lead to fires, injuries to personnel, or unhealthful working conditions.

All aisles within the office should be clearly defined and kept free of obstructions.

Chairs, files, bookcases and desks must be replaced or repaired if they become damaged. Damaged chairs can be especially hazardous.

Materials stored within supply rooms must be neatly stacked and readily reached by adequate aisles. Under no circumstances will materials be stacked within 18 inches of ceiling fire sprinkler heads.

Materials shall not be stored so that they project into aisles or passageways in a manner that could cause persons to trip or could hinder emergency evacuation.



# Emergency Procedures



- In the event of an emergency, always follow your office procedures for evacuation.
- Do not run to exits, walk and stay alert.
- In the event of a fire, only attempt to use a fire extinguisher if you feel confident, and the area of the fire is less than the size of a small trash can.



# Can you identify the hazards?

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
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7. \_\_\_\_\_
8. \_\_\_\_\_
9. \_\_\_\_\_
10. \_\_\_\_\_
11. \_\_\_\_\_
12. \_\_\_\_\_



# Answer Key

1. Tripping Hazard
2. Fall Hazard
3. Clutter
4. Clutter
5. Open Drawer
6. Exposed Blade
7. Clutter
8. Eye Strain
9. Electrical Hazard
10. Clutter
11. Spill Hazard
12. Non-Ergonomic Chair



Don't be a victim of office mayhem.



# Environmental Health and Safety

- Programs and Services
  - Fire Protection Engineering
  - Life Safety & Emergency Preparedness
  - Environmental Compliance
  - Laboratory Safety
  - Occupational Safety
  - Occupational Health and Medical Surveillance
  - Materials Management
  - Industrial Hygiene
  - Chemical Hygiene
  - Safety Training
- Location: University Health Services Bldg., Room 002 (basement)
- Phone number: 744-7241
- Email: [EHS@okstate.edu](mailto:EHS@okstate.edu)
- Website: <http://ehs.okstate.edu/>

# QUESTIONS?

