



## **Safety & Risk Office 5-Minute Safety Talk No. 16 – Office Safety**

*Note to Supervisor: This 5-Minute Safety Talk (in some places, it might be called a Toolbox Talk or a Tailgate Talk) is designed not only to communicate important safety information to your employees, but also to be given to them by you, which will hopefully reinforce the message and let them know your expectations for safety. You can use the text below as a script to be rendered verbatim or just as talking points to be stated in your own words. Please also complete the attendance listing on the last page and send it to Safety & Risk, Mail Stop 66.*

You may think that since you work in an office you don't have to worry about being injured. However, offices can become dangerous because people don't anticipate the potential hazards, and many people who work in them take their safety for granted.

Studies show that over one-fourth of office injuries are caused by falls. In fact, falls of one kind or another account for almost half of the accidents occurring at the College. One-third of the falls incurred by women are due to wearing high heels, which make falls more likely. Consider wearing lower, wider heels

Other things that can cause falls are spills on floors, worn carpets or exposed carpet seams, electrical cords running across the floor, open desk or file drawers, boxes or supplies stored in aisles or waste baskets placed where you could trip over them. Look around to see if you can spot any of these potential problems. If you find any, take the time to get them fixed.

If you need to use stairs or steps to get to your office, watch out! Falls on stairs cause more than 33,000 disabling work injuries in the US each year. About 2/3 of the workers falling on stairs were not using handrails when they fell. Many were carrying objects, or slipped on something left on the steps. Accidents on stairs are usually serious—80% of these falls result in lost work days. Use handrails, pick up anything you see on the stairs, don't use stairs for storage and don't try to carry things when using stairs if you can avoid it.

Use common sense with chairs, and don't use them for anything except sitting. Straight-back chairs aren't recliners, so don't lean way back—the chair could flip over. Chairs should never be used as replacements for stools or ladders.

Most offices seem to have an intersection that needs a traffic light to keep people from bumping into each other. Be especially careful while carrying hot drinks. Don't carry stacks of material so high that your vision is obstructed. Carrying this much material not only blocks your vision, but could also strain your back.

Watch out for avalanches if you pile "stuff" on top of filing cabinets. Even a carefully stacked pile may start sliding due to vibration from opening and shutting file drawers. Also keep an eye out for overloaded upper file drawers. This may cause the entire filing cabinet to tip over on top of you when you open the drawer. Re-distribute some of the weight to the lower drawers to reduce this chance, and check to make sure the filing cabinet is bolted to the adjacent cabinet, if it can be done.

Some other tips to avoid injuries in the office:

- Avoid walking and reading at the same time. If it is important enough to read, then stop and read it.
- Never leave file cabinets open and unattended; never, not even for a minute. How long does it really take to open a file cabinet?
- Never run in the office. Nothing is so important that you must risk running into a co-worker.
- Leave your shoes on. If your shoes are too uncomfortable to wear all day, then wear different shoes. Running around the office barefoot is a sure way to stub a toe or pick up a staple.
- When you must carry files, don't carry more than you are capable of. If you're grunting or your muscles get tired, you're carrying too much, and a back injury could be the result. Use a cart or make more trips.
- Avoid placing extension cords on the floor. Not only are they tripping hazard, but also they can become fire hazards.
- Never, ever put your fingers in an automatic stapler or stamper. Always unplug it before you try to unjam it.
- Always keep aisle ways clear. Never stack boxes or supplies in aisle ways or in front of egress paths. Never arrange offices with desks in front of exits.
- To prevent back strain, avoid bending at the waist when accessing low files. If you must access low files, either stoop down or get on your knees.
- Avoid twisting and reaching for files or other materials in your work station. Move your whole body to prevent back strain.

These are just a few tips that can make your office area safer. Look around, and you no doubt will spot other problems that can be easily fixed. When you see a hazard, don't assume it is someone else's responsibility. If you don't do something about it, who will?

# 5-Minute Safety Talk No. 16 – Office Safety Attendance List

Presenter: \_\_\_\_\_ Date/Time: \_\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_

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**Send to the Safety & Risk Office, Mail Stop # 66, when completed.**