

Top 10 Office Environment Safety Reminders for Supervisors

In offices, classrooms, and retail shops, slips trips and falls are the Number One cause of disabling injuries.

Here are several reminders for supervisors to help prevent slip and fall injuries as well as other ergonomic office exposures:

According to recent IWIF claims statistics:

The top two reasons for back injuries were:

1. "Struck by" an object or person, and
2. "Falls on the same level."

The top reason for knee injuries was a trip and fall on the same level.

1 Reduce repetitions. Have your employees avoid repeating actions as much as possible. Or, if several different movements are possible, have them switch from one to another from time to time.



2 Look at – and adjust if necessary – the height of the chair and keyboard or the level of the work surface.

Even a slight change in angle, height, or distance can make a major change in the amount of stress on the body. Adjust the chair or work surface so employees' elbows form roughly a 90-degree angle. This produces less stress on tendons and nerves. Also, the wrists should remain straight when typing.

3 Encourage frequent changes in posture or work position, which helps reduce stress in a single area of the body. Or, allow your employees to take breaks to give their bodies time to recover from repetitive motions. Allow them to adjust their pace to prevent extreme fatigue. Encourage them to stand up and stretch from time to time.

4 Insist that employees keep all floors and walkways clear of tripping hazards, including electrical, telephone, and computer cables as well as boxes.

5 Watch for other unsafe conditions such as torn carpeting, defective equipment, burned out lights, loose steps, etc. Make sure your employees report these conditions to you, and have these damaged and defective areas fixed immediately.



6 Watch out for slippery surfaces. Provide warning signs for wet floor areas. This is a federal OSHA Accident Prevention Standard. To create non-slip areas, use non-slip mats, no-skid waxes, and flooring coated with "grit" for traction. Also consider promoting a "safe shoe" policy – one that requires appropriate shoes be worn for the job.



7 Don't climb on chairs, desks, or boxes to reach things. Use a step ladder instead. Hold onto handrails when using stairways.

8 Watch where you are going. Don't block your view by carrying loads higher than eye level.

9 Have a proactive snow and ice removal plan in place. During the colder months, uncleared snow and ice on walkways and in parking lots can be a major slip and fall hazard for employees.

10 Watch for symptoms of possible injury. If necessary, refer employees for medical attention. The sooner you notice an injury, the sooner your injured employee will seek treatment, and the sooner the injury will be addressed. Studies show the earlier any injury is treated, the better the prognosis will be and the earlier the employee can return to work. ■

Supervisors should always follow all OSHA/MOSH standards requiring clean, orderly, and sanitary working and walking conditions.