

An Injury-Free Office

A SAFETY TALK FOR DISCUSSION LEADERS

This safety talk is designed for discussion leaders to use in preparing safety meetings.

Set a specific time and date for your safety meeting. Publicize your meeting so everyone involved will be sure to attend.

Review this safety talk before the meeting and become familiar with its content. Make notes about the points made in this talk that pertain to your workplace. You should be able to present the material in your own words and lead the discussion without reading it.

Seating space is not absolutely necessary, but arrangements should be made so that those attending can easily see and hear the presentation.

Collect whatever materials and props you will need ahead of time. Try to use equipment in your workplace to demonstrate your points.

DURING THE MEETING

Give the safety talk in your own words. Use the printed talk merely as a guide.

The purpose of a safety meeting is to initiate discussion of safety problems and provide solutions to those problems. Encourage employees to discuss hazards or potential hazards they encounter on the job. Ask them to suggest ways to improve safety in their area.

Don't let the meeting turn into a gripe session about unrelated topics. As discussion leader, it's your job to make sure the topic is safety. Discussing other topics wastes time and can ruin the effectiveness of your safety meeting.

At the end of the meeting, ask employees to sign a sheet on the back of this talk as a record that they attended the safety meeting. Keep this talk on file for your records.

An Injury-Free Office

Although accidents involving office personnel generally occur less frequently than mishaps to industrial workers, the resulting injuries can be just as painful and severe. Each year in the United State between 300 and 400 deaths occur in an office setting.

A broken bone sustained from a fall in an office costs just as much to treat as a broken bone caused by a fall in the plant. Of course, not all office injuries are serious, but even slight injuries may result in lost workdays, which interfere with normal operations.

Office safety is everyone's responsibility. It involves two major factors; first, developing employee interest in safe practices both on and off the job; and second, correcting unsafe conditions.

Falls are the most common office accident, accounting for the greatest number of disabling injuries. The disabling injury rate of falls among office workers is two to two and one half times higher than the rate for non-office employees.

Walking, climbing ladders or stairs and even sitting in a chair--all of these activities can result in a fall. To prevent these accidents, keep floors clean, dry and free of refuse. Also, make sure they're in good repair. Telephone and electrical cords should not be placed where you or your co-workers could trip over them. Where collision hazards at blind corners exist, properly angled mirrors could be installed to eliminate this hazard. Special walkway or aisleway problems may be handled by painting a center line on the floor to define the direction of pedestrian travel.

Replacement or repair of defective chairs will reduce the number of falls from chairs. Chairs should never be used as ladders.

Ladders should be equipped with nonslip material on the feet and treads; they should also be suited for the purpose intended and properly maintained. Braking attachments on rolling and trolley-type ladders must be checked to make sure they function properly.

Stairs are safer when equipped with anti-slip treads, approved handrails and adequate lighting.

Striking against an object can also cause many office injuries. These accidents result when employees do not notice open desk or file drawers and other office equipment. Whether seated at your desk or walking, you should be aware that hurrying can produce such injuries. Always walk in designated aisles--avoid shortcuts.

Striking against sharp burrs on metal filing cabinets and office furniture can cause injuries. These burrs may also tear or damage clothing, they can be eliminated by filing the rough metal edges.

Splinters and loose veneer on desks and chairs can produce similar results. Repairs to chipped or broken furniture should be made immediately.

Workers being struck by objects are usually attributed to falling equipment. Small index card files, calculators and typewriters, for example, should not be placed near the edges of desks, filing cabinets or tables because these items can slide onto the floor.

If a filing cabinet is unbalanced, with heavier material in the top drawers, it could easily fall over when drawers are pulled out.

Personnel may also sustain injuries when caught in or between machinery or equipment.

When closing drawers in desks or filing cabinets make sure your hands, with the fingers brought into the palm, are held against the drawer face to avoid catching your fingers. Always use the handle when opening or closing the spring-loaded shelf on a typewriter desk; these shelves may open and close rapidly and present a definite hazard. Doors, windows and some office machinery are similar handtraps.

Strains from overexertion often disable employees. These injuries usually occur when employees move heavy or awkward loads. By avoiding sudden movements and getting help for heavy tasks, you can avoid a serious strain or back injury.

Numerous fires causing loss of life and property have been the result of neglecting some simple fire prevention rules. You should be familiar with fire escapes, fire alarm systems and firefighting equipment. By observing strict housekeeping standards, storing flammable substances in approved receptacles and extinguishing matches and cigarette butts before discarding them, the ravaging effects of fire can be minimized.

Through a program of scheduled inspections, unsafe conditions can be recognized and corrected before they lead to serious injuries.

Take a few moments each day to walk through your work area. You will be surprised how many unsafe conditions exist. Look for items previously pointed out, such as objects protruding into walkways, file cabinets that are weighted toward the top or frayed electrical cords.

Keep in mind that office machinery and equipment can be hazardous if used improperly. Even a simple procedure of adding developing fluid to a copier requires special precautions. Some copier fluids are extremely flammable or caustic. Care should be taken to prevent this fluid from splashing into your eyes. Flammable liquids require special storage; they should be locked in fireproof cabinets and the rags used to wipe up duplicating fluid should be appropriately stored.

Smoking should be prohibited within 10 feet of where flammable duplicating fluids are being handled or stored. Every employee should know the location and the proper use of the firefighting equipment located in the area.

Although many injuries sustained in an office affect only the employee involved, remember that your actions can also affect others. New employees may learn many of their work habits by observing co-workers. Bear in mind that you may be one of those "teachers."