



Office Safety Program



The following safety related program is for information purposes only. The SORT committee's intention is that each participating district will look at this program and discuss how it compares to the district's own practices. This program is NOT a complete safety program, but intended as a guideline. There is no guarantee that following a given program will eliminate or substantially reduce the risk of claim or injuries. It is expected that member districts will consider this program and adapt or modify them to fit with the district's needs and circumstances.

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OFFICE SAFETY PROGRAM

PURPOSE / SCOPE

This office safety program has been developed to protect all employees in and around the office areas. Employees shall understand the potential hazards and the district's efforts to protect the employee from injuries or time away from work.

The intent of this program is to describe precautions and procedures that must be followed. Management and staff will develop Standard Operating Procedures for specific sites, areas, and tasks, which will consider all safety issues.

Policy Statement

It is the district's policy that all employees working in and around office areas comply fully with this program. This program contains minimum requirements for working safely when exposed to the hazards in the office area.

HAZARD ANALYSIS

Office workers nationwide sustain approximately 76,000 fractures, dislocations, strains, sprains, and contusions annually. The leading types of disabling office accidents are: slips, trips, falls, and strains, over-exertion, struck by or striking objects and caught in or between objects.

Hazard Description

Many hazards, which cause thousands of injuries and health problems annually, exist in the office. Such hazards as: slippery floors, open drawers, poor lighting, noise, physical layout, housekeeping, exits, egresses, fire hazards, handling, storage, electrical equipment, computer terminals, ventilation, stress and poorly designed furniture or equipment.

Work Related Musculoskeletal Disorders (WMSD) can be caused by poor office design and layout, poor posture, repetitive motion leading to pain, numbness and tingling or worse, by injuries. These disorders can lead to a lifetime of disability and/or pain. An approach to WMSD, also called ergonomics, can prevent these injuries.

Office machinery may have hazardous moving parts, such as electric hole-punchers and paper shredders. This type of office machinery can cause lacerations, abrasions, and fractures. Misuse of pens, pencils, paper, letter openers, scissors and staplers can cause cuts, punctures, and related infections.

Office spaces are usually an enclosed area and can be susceptible to poor ventilation. Sources of air pollution in the office can be from natural agents such as; molds, spores, cleaning fluids and synthetic chemicals, as well as man-made sources. Some employees are sensitive to chemicals and smells; therefore, you are encouraged to limit your use of fragrance, aftershave, air fresheners or scented hand creams. An inadequate ventilation system can deliver poor indoor air; provide poor humidity control, as well as temperature imbalances.

Per the designs of office spaces, some can be noisier than others. Many sources can contribute to the noise level in office spaces. Office machines, telephones, human voices, and radios can produce tension and stress as well as damage to hearing. Average conversation can cause as much as 50 decibels (dB). A noisy office can be as high as 80 dB. Washington State Department of Labor and Industries recognizes 85 dB as the threshold for an 8 – hour limit.

Lighting is important in the office working space. Lighting problems can come from glare, eyestrain, fatigue, and double vision. Poor lighting can be a contributing factor in accidents.

RESPONSIBILITIES

District

To implement an effective ergonomic control program incorporating employee awareness and training and ergonomic design of work tasks.

Safety Program Coordinator

Assure that all employees follow this program. Perform inspections to verify that no hazard conditions exist. If hazards do exist, make efforts to eliminate the hazard.

Managers

Educate employees on the importance of following this program. Help identify hazards that may exist. Help to eliminate of the hazards.

Employees

Follow this safety program. Report any hazards that they may recognize. Perform measures to prevent hazards from occurring.

GUIDELINES/RULES

Important factors related to physical layout, orderliness, and housekeeping hazards:

- Poor design or poor housekeeping can lead to crowding, lack of privacy, and slips, trips or falls.
- Maintain at least 3 feet distance between desks and at least 50 square feet per employee.
- Keep telephone and electrical cords out of aisles and walkways.
- Office machines shall be kept away from edges of desks and tables.
- Regularly inspect carpeting and floors and make repairs or replace if necessary.

- Remove excess debris from the work area.
- Clean up spills promptly.

Controls to ensure proper and safe egress and exit:

- Never block an exit in anyway.
- Minimum access to exits should be a width of 28 inches (check with local authorities in your area).
- Provide two or more exits.
- Mark all exits clearly with signs and lights.
- Emergency exits such as stairways shall be free of obstructions and adequately lit.
- Employees must be aware of exits and trained in evacuation procedures.

Fire hazards can be serious problems in office atmospheres:

- Do not allow large amounts of combustible materials, which can ignite and emit toxic fumes to accumulate.
- Fire extinguishers and alarms must be conspicuously placed and accessible.
- Store excess paper material inside cabinets, files, or lockers.
- Use flame retardant materials.

Handling and storage hazards:

- Use proper lifting techniques to prevent musculoskeletal disorders such as sprains, strains, and inflamed joints.
- Store materials properly to prevent objects from falling on workers.
- Do not store materials on top of cabinets or in aisles or walkways.
- Store heavy objects on lower shelves and stack neatly.
- Identify and properly store flammable and combustible materials.

Office furniture hazards:

- If any furniture is defective do not use and replace immediately.
- Do not climb on any office chair as a ladder or stool.

- Verify that chairs are properly designed and regularly inspected for missing casters and loose parts.
- Do not lean back in chairs with your feet up.
- Do not scoot across the floor while sitting in a chair.
- Open only one drawer at a time.
- Do not locate file cabinets close to doorways or in aisles.
- Use drawer handles to close file drawers.
- Keep desks in good condition and free from sharp edges, nails, etc.
- Keep desk and file cabinet's drawers closed when not in use.
- Keep document cover closed on copy machine while in use.
- Isolate machines in an enclosed space to reduce noise exposure.
- Install carpet, draperies, and acoustical ceiling tiles to muffle noises.
- Adjust telephone volumes to the lowest level.
- Any equipment with sharp points or rotating parts must be guarded
- Secure equipment that tends to move during operation.
- Do not wear long or loose clothing or accessories around machinery with moving parts.

Electrical hazards in the office area:

- Faulty, defective, unsafe, poorly maintained or non-approved equipment shall not be used.
- Never misuse equipment or allow unsafe installation.
- Equipment must be properly grounded to prevent shock injuries.
- Supply enough outlets to prevent overloading of circuits.
- Cords shall not be dragged over nails, hooks or any other sharp or rough surface or object.
- Never allow any live electrical parts to be exposed.
- Equipment must be disconnected from power source before any cleaning, maintenance, or adjusting can be performed.

Lighting and ventilation:

- Ventilation systems should be checked and filters changed per manufacture guidelines.
- Lighting systems should have regular maintenance.
- Walls and ceilings should be light colored to reduce glare.
- Install adjustable shades on windows
- Use indirect or task lighting.

ERGONOMICS

Ergonomics has been likened to, “The science of fitting the workplace to the worker”, or “fitting the work-place conditions and job demands to the capabilities of the working population.” Each employer should strive to prevent workers from forcefully adapting to the work environment.

Ergonomics tips should include checking the arrangement of computer monitors and work stations:

- Prolong computer monitor viewing can cause eye irritation.
- Back, neck and shoulder pain can be cause by poor positioning on the monitor.
- Constant use of the keyboard can cause cumulative trauma disorders, such as carpal tunnel syndrome.
- Factors to consider include: relation of operator to screen, operator’s posture, lighting, keyboard position, chair height, document holder and screen design, characters, and color.
- An assessment of your work area by qualified individuals can provide a more comfortable work area and prevent work related musculoskeletal disorders.

Computer workstations:

- Avoid over reaching
- Minimize head tilt or rotation
- Prevent hands from flexing up or down
- Prevent hands from bending inward or outward
- Keep arms close to body and resting parallel to keyboard

Correct Workstation Posture:

- Keep monitor at eye level at a range of 18 –24 inches
- Sit with back & thighs fully supported
- Back of legs should be at 90-110 degree angles to back of thighs
- Soles of feet should be flat against ground or elevated support
- Support lumbar portion of back
- Back support should achieve 105-degree angle to seat

Use of Mouse:

- Control mouse movement from your elbow
- Keep wrist straight and neutral
- Use an ergonomic mouse designed to fit a more natural hand position when being used

Ergonomics in our trucks:

- Keep proper distance from steering wheel, brake pedal, laptop, & writing platforms
- Be careful to ensure proper mirror adjustments
- Place consoles in easy to reach area
- Never drive while utilizing office functions

Rest Exercises:

- Look away occasionally, rest or refocus eyes
- Relax hands
- Get up and move about
- Try mild isometrics
- Be certain you are comfortable during repetitive motions

TRAINING

Employee Training

- Employees need to understand the problems of repetitive motions.
- Employees must use ergonomic methods always.

Supervisor Training

- Understand and keep up to date on all ergonomic methods and equipment used in the workplace.
- Verify that all ergonomic practices and methods are constantly used.
- Budget equipment and training sources for all employees.

REFERENCES/RESOURCES

More information on office safety can be found at www.Lni.wa.gov. For a list of Core Rules for basic workplace health and safety, visit www.lni.wa.gov/safety/rules/chapter/800/. You can also speak with a consultant. To find a local office near you go to www.lni.wa.gov/Safety/Consultation/Consultants.asp

REVISION RECORD

Revision No.	Revision Date	Approval Date	Change
1.0.0	3-17-08		Checked and placed in new format
	5-18-10		Streamlined & added ergonomics
	4-11-17		Updated links & cleaned language/formatting

APPROVALS

Safety Committee Chairperson	Date	General Manager	Date
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