

## Safety Tips

# Avoiding Common Office Injuries



**When it comes to workplace hazards, the office setting is not the first place that comes to mind, but it does have its share of potential problems. Many of which can be eliminated by following good office safety practices.**

### Steer Clear of Falls

- Be sure pathways are well-lit and clear of tripping hazards.
- Walk in designated aisles and leave enough time so that you don't have to hurry.
- Secure electrical cords and wires away from walkways. If necessary, request more outlets rather than running electrical cords across aisles.
- To protect your back and prevent a chair from slipping out from under you, avoid excessive bending, twisting and leaning backward while seated. Instead, squat and stand whenever you have to retrieve something from the floor.
- Always use a step stool or step ladder to reach high places. Never use chairs, desks or stacks of boxes as ladders.
- Contact the custodian to clean spills and tracked-in rain or snow promptly and to mark wet areas with visible signage.
- Pick up objects you or your co-workers dropped or left on the floor.
- Close desk or file drawers immediately after use.
- Report loose carpeting or damaged flooring.
- Wear stable shoes with non-slip soles.
- Store items that you refer to often next to you, not on the floor; keep other items used less frequently in another storage area.
- Do not attempt to lift heavy boxes without assistance from a co-worker or mechanical lifting aide or use a utility cart.

- Do not carry loads that obstruct your vision.
- Use the handrails provided on stairs and take one step at a time.
- Keep to the right when walking in hallways.
- When sitting don't lean so far back in your chair that the wheels or legs lift up off the floor. Also, do not put all your weight at the very front edge of the chair so that the chair can tip over.
- Only use chairs that have a stable base of five wheels or castors, or four legs.
- Do not use chairs with wheels as a means of locomotion.

### Protect your Back

- Back injuries can be a result of a slip or fall, but also come from improper lifting. Always bend at the knees, not the back. Lift with your legs and don't try to lift more than you can safely handle.
- Sitting in one position can harm you by causing muscular tension and constricting your spine. It can also cause eyestrain. Arrange your desk or work station so that your arms, wrists, legs, back and neck can be maintained in a comfortable "neutral" position, with proper back support.  
*(For further information see the Safety Tips for Computer Users Tip Sheet)*
- Periodically, take a few minutes to walk around the office or do some gentle stretches to relieve some muscle tension.

### Filing Cabinet Safety

- Be sure to close drawers when not in use, immediately after removing files.
- Open one cabinet drawer at a time to prevent the cabinet from tipping over.
- Do not set files or heavy objects on top of cabinets

*(continued on back)*

## Filing Cabinet Safety *continued*

because they may topple down on you, or cause the whole cabinet to fall down.

- Secure cabinets to the wall or floor if they contain heavy items.
- Locate cabinets so they do not open into aisles.
- Load cabinets from the bottom up for stability, placing the heaviest load in the lower drawers.
- Never open a drawer if someone is crouched below it.
- Use handles to close drawers to avoid catching fingers.
- Avoid overfilling cabinets to prevent paper and staple cuts.

## Office Machines and Electrical Safety

- Follow directions for using all office equipment.
- Ensure electrical wires for office equipment are properly grounded.
- Disconnect frayed electrical cords and report them promptly.
- Unplug equipment when not in use and before adjusting or repairing. Do this by pulling the plug, not the cord. Make sure the equipment is switched off before re-connecting to the power supply.
- Eliminate octopus connections—don't overload outlets or extension cords.
- Light duty extension cords are not allowed. Surge protectors are only allowed to be used with low voltage equipment such as computer equipment.
- Keep dangling hair, jewelry, etc. away from equipment when in use.
- Seek service from a professional when major repair is required.

## Hand Injuries and Other Injuries

- To avoid papercuts use fingertip guards when handling paper.
- Use a letter opener when opening envelopes and boxes.
- Store pencils and pens points down or flat in drawers.

### DISCLAIMER:

This Safety Tips Sheet is being provided for educational purposes only and addresses common reasons for accidents. It is not intended to imply fault or negligence on the part of any employee. It is the law, policy, and intent of Nassau BOCES to provide a safe and healthful workplace. However, the basic responsibility for safety and health rests with all BOCES employees. The measures contained herein can help employees to ensure their safety.

Although the information and recommendations contained in this Safety Tips Sheet have been compiled from sources believed to be reliable, the Office of the Nassau BOCES Safety Coordinator makes no guarantee as to the correctness, sufficiency or completeness of such information or recommendations. Other or additional safety measures may be required under particular circumstances.

**For more information call the Safety Hotline 396-2400.**

- Use staple removers to remove staples.
- Guard sharp edges on furniture or have them filed smooth. Repairs to chipped or broken furniture should be made immediately.
- Safe paper cutter use:
  - Keep knife blades in locked position when not in use.
  - Use proper guards.
  - Maintain firm grip on blade handle.
  - Do not cut too many papers at once.
- Prevent being struck by objects by not placing calculators, staplers, index card files, etc. near the edge of desks or filing cabinets.

**A seemingly safe office environment can be hazardous if you do not stay alert and treat it with respect. It is important to practice safe work habits at all times, no matter where you work.**

