TAKE TIME FOR SAFETY

"Office Safety"

Trainer Outline

1. **This safety session will teach employees to:**
   - Be aware that hazards exist, even in a seemingly safe office environment.
   - Understand that many accidents can be avoided by good housekeeping.
   - Know how to prevent ergonomic injuries.

   OSHA estimates 40,000 office workers sustain disabling injuries each year, and that 200 of these injuries are fatal. In addition, there are countless cases of back injuries, bruises and skin rashes that are not reported, many of them because they are not considered a direct result of unsafe office environments. Office safety is an important aspect of workplace safety and should not be considered trivial. The leading causes of disabling office accidents are slips and falls, strains, overexertion, falling objects and workers striking objects or being caught in or between objects. Other hazards include electrical equipment and wiring, and fires.

2. **Many office hazards are caused by failure to practice good housekeeping**
   Common office accidents involve slips, trips, and falls caused by:
   - Drawers left open
   - Extension cords
   - Paper or other debris in the walkways
   - Spills that have not been wiped up promptly.
   - File cabinets that become top heavy and tip over when drawers are left open.
   - Heavy items that are stored on a high shelf that can slide off and hit someone.
   - Flooring and carpet in disrepair. It should be kept in good repair to avoid tripping accidents.

3. **Careless behavior can cause accidents as well**
   - Never climb on a box or chair to reach an item on a high shelf.
   - Never carry a load so high that it blocks the view of where you're going.
   - Get a dolly or someone to help you move a heavy load.
   - Don't bend to reach something on the floor from an unstable chair.

4. **Maintain all electrical equipment in good condition**
   - Stop using any equipment with frayed wiring immediately-repair or replace it.
   - Avoid using extension cords except as a temporary measure. Make sure they are not positioned where someone could trip over them.
   - Don't overload circuits.
   - Don't use electrical appliances when your hands are wet.

5. **Be familiar with emergency procedures in order to react quickly if the need arises**
   - Know where fire extinguishers are located and how to use them for a small fire.
   - Know how to use any fire alarms as well.
   - Never allow evacuation routes or fire extinguishers to be blocked by supplies or other items.
   - Know at least two evacuation routes (in case one is blocked) and the proper meeting place following an evacuation.
   - Do not stop to gather personal possessions in case of an emergency.

6. Organize your workstation using proper ergonomic principles

- Make sure your chair is adjusted so that it is comfortable for your size.
- Get a footrest if necessary if your feet don't touch the floor.
- The top of your computer screen should be slightly below eye level and angled slightly upward.
- Adjust the lighting to avoid glare on the monitor.
- Most people are comfortable when the viewing distance to the screen if about 25-30 inches.
- Get a document holder if you often copy material.
- Keep frequently used items within easy reach to avoid constant stretching, bending, or twisting.

6. Proper work habits can also help to prevent musculoskeletal problems

- Keep your wrists straight when you are using the keyboard.
- If you have a wrist rest, it should be used only when you are not actually entering data.
- Take mini-breaks every 20 minutes or so-gaze into the distance for a few seconds- this will help to prevent eyestrain.
- Go to the printer or make a phone call-this will use different muscles and allow your fingers and wrists to relax from constant keying.
- Avoid holding the phone between your head and shoulder-it's a very easy way to develop neck and shoulder pain.
- Hold it in your hand or get a headset if you often use the computer and the phone at the same time.

7. Discussion Points:

Look around you. Are there hazards we haven't talked about? Perhaps there are stairs or other areas with dim lighting, and it would be easy to trip or fall. Perhaps there are supplies piled in traffic areas. Make it a point to look for hazards and reduce them yourself or bring them to a supervisor's attention.

8. Conclusion:

Reducing office hazards will help to keep everyone safe. Organizing your own work space and developing proper work habits can help you to avoid painful ergonomic injuries.

9. Test Your Knowledge

Have your trainees take the quiz on office safety. By testing their knowledge, you can decide if they are aware of the importance of proper housekeeping and employing good ergonomic principles for safety's sake or whether they will need further training on this important subject.

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Quiz

Office Safety Quiz

1. Hazards that might exist in an office include falling objects and slips, trips and falls.
a) True b) False

2. To reduce electrical office hazards, avoid using extension cords and any equipment with frayed wiring immediately.
a) True b) False

3. If the fire alarm goes off, get your coat and personal items as you leave the building.
a) True b) False

4. Moving large items with dollies, rather than lifting them, is one way to prevent back injuries.
a) True b) False

5. It's safer to use a ladder, not boxes or furniture, to reach high places.
a) True b) False

6. You should always use a wrist rest when keying in data.
a) True b) False

7. Unsafe acts leading to office accidents are running in the halls and carrying loads you can't see over.
a) True b) False

8. Adjust the lighting at your workstation to avoid glare on the the computer monitor.
a) True b) False

9. Taking mini-breaks to gaze into the distance for a few seconds will help to reduce eyestrain.
b) True b) False

10. You should know at least one route to follow to evacuate in case of an emergency.
c) True b) False

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Quiz Answers

ANSWERS TO OFFICE SAFETY QUIZ

1. a. True.

2. a. True.

3. b. False. Never stop to gather personal items in case of an emergency. Remember, a fire alarm may not be just a test.

4. a. True. You might also ask someone to help you.

5. a. True.

6. b. False. You should use the wrist rest as a resting place when you are not keying data.

7. a. True.

8. a. True.

9. a. True.

10. b. False. You should know at least two routes in case one is blocked.

Office Safety Do's and Don'ts Checklist

DO:

- Report slippery or uneven floor surfaces, torn carpet or linoleum
- Keep file and desk drawers closed
- Stack cartons and supplies carefully so they won't fall
- Be sure file cabinets aren't top-heavy
- Replace electrical cords when insulation frays
- Report poor lighting or missing handrails on stairs
- Make sure plugs match their outlets
- Put materials and papers away when not in use
- Check container labels and material safety data sheets before using office chemicals
- Be careful with knife cutters, razor blades, scissors, and other pointed objects that could cause injuries
- Know whom to contact and where to go in an emergency
- Know where fire extinguishers and first-aid kits are kept
- Check that fire extinguishers are inspected regularly
- Use dollies and similar equipment to move large or heavy items
- Use proper lifting techniques that let the legs, not the back, do the work
- Use a ladder or step stool, rather than stand on furniture or boxes, to reach high places
- Make sure your computer workstation is properly adjusted.

Don't:

- Leave cords, boxes, and materials in aisles.
- Block emergency exits
- Use extension cords unless necessary
- Overload electrical outlets
- Leave combustible trash in open containers
- Leave containers of chemicals open
- Carry loads you can't see over
- Smoke in unauthorized areas
- Run in aisles, halls, or on stairways
- Throw objects or engage in horseplay