



Safety in Office Premises

The following highlight some of the hazards that may exist in your premises. They are by no means exhaustive and will vary depending on your own particular business. As a starting point use the blank sheet provided in this pack and carry out your own simple risk assessment.

Main Types of Hazard

Slips, trips and falls

Most accidents occur when staff trip over trailing leads and uneven floor surfaces, slip on wet surfaces, or fall when trying to reach items e.g. by standing on chairs.

Managing the Risk

- Fasten cables and leads securely or re-route overhead if possible.
- Keep passageways and stairs clear and clean up spillages immediately.
- Provide adequate lighting.
- Provide proper step-ladders to reach anything not accessible from the ground.

Equipment

Guillotines and paper shredders can cause cutting injuries, and staff opening photocopiers to unjam paper or replace toners can be exposed to chemicals and hot surfaces.

Incorrectly loaded or overloaded filling cabinets may topple over injuring users.

- Guards on cutters should always be in place and regularly checked and maintained.
- Unauthorised maintenance of equipment should be prohibited.
- Provide sufficient storage space and ensure balanced distribution of papers within cabinets. Store heavy goods at lower levels.
- Train staff in the safe use of equipment.

Visual Display Units

Most problems are related to the arrangement of the workstation which may cause glare or reflection on screens (eyestrain) and/or lead to awkward postures or movements (muscular fatigue).

- Assess individual work-stations with particular reference to lighting and the adjustability and general layout of chairs, keyboards, screens and work documents.
- Provide staff with information, instruction and training.

Manual Handling

Lifting and moving paper supplies or items of office furniture can cause back injuries or muscular strain.

- Avoid lifting items which are too heavy or bulky - use a trolley or castors where possible.
- Train staff in proper lifting techniques.

Violence towards staff

Theft of cash or computer equipment, or dealing with the public may expose staff to a risk of violence.

- Consider using CCTV, panic alarms and other security measures.
- Try to avoid lone working in "at risk" situations.

■ For Further Information:

The Guide to Workplace Health & Safety,
Health & Safety Executive for Northern Ireland.