Office Safety

In general, offices are safe places in which to work. However, there are a number of practices and tools of the trade that can be very hazardous.

One of the worst offenders is the file cabinet. Drawers left open are "striking against" hazards, and a full top drawer with empty or partly-filled bottom drawers can cause the cabinet to tip over.

Standing on chairs to reach high shelves is another dangerous practice; use a stepstool or stepladder. But when you do use them, make sure you're not in front of a door that can swing inward and knock the ladder or stool over. In addition, some chairs can be tipped over if you lean back too far.

Electrical office equipment such as computers, paper shredders or binding machines must be grounded or double-insulated. Severe shocks can be received, especially when operating in damp or wet conditions.

Paper clips, pens, pencils and some kinds of paper can cause slipping hazards – pick them up when you see them on the floor.

Paper has sharp edges and can cause painful cuts.

Carrying objects that block your view of the path ahead can bring about a serious collision. Make sure to approach swinging doors cautiously.

Elevator doors can be severe pinch points. Don't try to beat the elevator doors. Sometime they may not retract, and the result could be fatal.

Lifting can result in back injuries. Get help with heavy or awkward loads.

Let's take a look at drafting or art department hazards. Perhaps compasses or drawing instruments are the worst offenders because of their very sharp points. Knives, paper edges and paper cutters also require an alert and careful user. Push pins and thumbtacks can produce serious puncture wounds.

Sharp-pointed pencils and drawing pens can also cause severe puncture wounds.

Not often mentioned, but of great injury potential, is horseplay. Rarely is any serious bodily harm intended when workers "fool around." However, some of the worst injuries, even fatalities, happen because of horseplay. It can happen anywhere, anytime. On record are cases of burst eardrums, broken arms, blindness and fatalities. And, of course, there are an untold number of less serious but still painful injuries.

Last but not least, good office safety includes knowing where fire extinguishers are located and the proper fire escape route. Access to the extinguishers or escape routes must never be blocked.

Bear in mind that seemingly commonplace office tools and equipment can be real hazards if you do not treat them with thought, alertness and respect.