

Introduction

When you think about dangerous jobs and job-related accidents and injuries, you usually think of industrial settings and factories. That's where you see workers wearing hard hats and steel-toed work boots.

You may not think of office areas as danger zones, but there are a surprising number of hazards even in this type of setting. In fact, a lot of the safety principles that apply on the factory floor carry over into the office area.

Identifying Hazards

As with any type of accident prevention program, office safety first requires that we recognize the hazards that exist.



Electrical hazards, for example, are often easy to spot if you're alert. Extension cords can be a major problem because they can lead to overloaded outlets. If you must use an extension cord, be sure that it's powerful enough to handle the equipment you're plugging in. Also, be sure that it is in good shape and does not run under a rug or through a high-traffic area. Some general electrical safety reminders include:

- Avoid overloading outlets.
- Always match plugs and outlets, making sure to never force a three-prong plug into a two-prong outlet.
- Check for worn or frayed cords and have them replaced immediately.
- Never place cords near heat or water.
- Never use electrical equipment when your hands or the equipment is wet.
- Report any potential electrical problems.



Trips and falls are easily prevented.

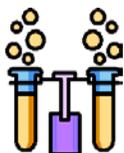
The classic tripping hazard in an office is the open bottom file drawer. It sounds so simple, but file drawers should be closed unless in use.

Slippery surfaces can be a problem in entrance areas, especially in bad weather when people have tracked in rain or snow. But also be on the lookout for spills and for areas that may have just been mopped or waxed. Another common tripping hazard is loose or torn carpet.

Chairs, especially those on wheels, can be dangerous as well. Sitting too far forward can be just as dangerous as leaning too far 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.



One final area of concern is **hazardous chemicals**. While this may not be a big problem in your office environment, it is still important because you may come in contact with some. Discuss specific chemicals you may have in your work area. Pay attention and read the labels so you are aware of any possible danger.