Office – General Fact Sheet



WHAT DOES AN OFFICE WORKER DO?

Office staff may type or file documents, correspondence, reports, statements and other material. Their workstation usually has a computer/laptop/keyboard and telephone, among other equipment.

The main duties of an office worker include:

- Answer telephone or personal enquiries.
- Photocopy and collate documents.
- Maintain and update filing, inventory, mailing and database systems.
- Open, sort and route incoming mail and courier packages.
- Process reports, applications, receipts, expenditures and other documents, using a computer.

What are some health and safety issues for office workers?

Office environments present a number of hazards, including:

- Perfumes and other scents (potential allergens).
- In some cases, exposure to cleaning products.
- Indoor air quality or exposure to toxic substances.
- Sitting for long periods of time.
- Working in from awkward positions, or performing repetitive manual tasks.
- Lifting awkward or heavy objects.
- Eye strain.
- Musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) from excessive computer use or improper ergonomic situations.
- Improperly adjusted chairs.
- Working in uncomfortable temperatures.
- Annoying or distracting noise and vibration from electronic equipment.
- Slips, trips and falls.
- Injuries from falling files or other objects
- Cuts from office tools such as scissors, mail openers, etc.
- Risk of violence.
- Working alone.
- Stress.
- Bullying.

What are some preventive measures for office workers?

- Learn about how to avoid musculoskeletal pain or injury from repetitive or physically awkward tasks. Take breaks as needed.

- Learn safe lifting techniques.
- Keep all work areas clear of clutter.
- Set-up your workstation ergonomically. Have a competent person assess your workstation for ergonomic issues.
- Know how to relax strained body parts by doing correct stretching exercises.
- Know emergency evacuation plan and procedures.
- Know personal or individual risk factors.

What are some good general safe work practices?

- Follow company safety rules.
- Learn fire safety.
- Learn about chemical safety, WHMIS and MSDSs.
- Know how to report a hazard and near miss.
- Practice safe lifting.
- Follow good housekeeping procedures.

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