



County of Henrico
 Department of Emergency
 Management &
 Workplace Safety

Verification	Originator	Revised	Issued
Initials	EMWS	EMWS	EMWS
Date	05/01/2015	07/27/2023	08/01/2023

Safety Manual
Chapter 17 Office Safety

Area of Application:	County of Henrico General Government & Schools	
Document Location:	http://employees.henrico.us/info/safety-manual/	
Revisions:		
Rev. No.	Date	Description
001	07/21/17	Updated definitions.
002	07/28/2022	Aligned EMWS titles and terminology.
003	07/27/2023	Added section on non-safety clothing and footwear requirements

Purpose:

This chapter will help County of Henrico Departments develop safety procedures in most office environments so that accidents are reduced, and unsafe conditions can be eliminated.

Scope:

This chapter applies to all County of Henrico employees, visitors, and authorized contractors.

Administration:

With guidance from the Department of Emergency Management & Workplace Safety (EMWS), each affected department will establish policies, in writing, if necessary, to ensure the recommendations and requirements of this chapter are met.

Injury Types:

Falls are the most disabling injuries that occur in the office environment. Nationally, 55% of total lost days are the result of falls.

- A. **Chair Falls** – occur as a person sits down or gets up, or moves around on the seat. Chair falls also happen when people lean back, tilt or put feet up on the desk.
- B. **Same Level Falls** – occur as slips on wet or slick floors, tripping over equipment, power cords or objects left on the floor. Good housekeeping procedures reduce tripping accidents.
- C. **Falls from Elevations** – occur from standing on chairs or other office furniture, instead of a stepstool. Falls from ladders, loading docks are included.
- D. **Overexertions** – occur while employees move, lift or carry office machines, boxed supplies, bookcases, file cabinets, refrigerators, desks, boxes of books, or other heavy loads. Reaching or stretching may also cause overexertion injuries.
- E. **Striking or Struck by Objects** – these injuries occur when an employee is struck by a falling object such as a file cabinet, office machine, box, or other object that has been dropped or falls on to him/her. Employees may be struck by windowless doors are opened from the opposite side. Unsecured boxes of office supplies, or equipment, can slide off shelves or cabinet tops. Injuries may occur after bumping into doors, desks, file cabinets, open desk drawers and co-workers.
- F. **Caught in or Between** – an employee who becomes caught in or between machinery or equipment. Fingers, hands, arms and legs can be caught in door jambs, windows, floor fans, and drawers.



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- G. **Miscellaneous office injuries** – foreign object or liquid in the eye, paper cuts, and spilled hot liquids.

Controlling Office Hazards:

A. Office Traffic:

1. Wet floors are often slippery. During inclement weather, employees should be mindful of slick floors. Place slip-resistant mats at all building entrances. When mopping, set up bright caution signs. Clean up liquid spills immediately.
2. Walk – never run.
3. Keep walkways clear of all tripping hazards such as wastebaskets, cartons, power cords, open file drawers, ladders, stools, and personal belongings at all times.
4. Repair or replace torn carpet and curled mats. Any other condition that could cause tripping or slipping should be reported to a supervisor immediately.

B. Stairways:

1. Always use handrails. Take one step at a time, stay to the right, and do not hurry.
2. Never store or throw items on steps or stairways. A sheet of paper, paper clip, or cellophane wrapper could create a slipping hazard. Placing items under stairwells is a fire code violation.

C. Elevators:

1. Walk – do not run – to the elevator.
2. Never stop an automatic elevator door with a hand or arm. Wait for the next elevator.

D. File Cabinets:

1. Drawers should be closed when not in use.
2. Cabinets should be set away from doors or walkways to keep exit routes clear.
3. Place the heaviest files in lower drawers.
4. Open only one drawer at a time.
5. When shutting a drawer, use the handle to avoid crushing fingers.

E. Paper:

1. To avoid paper cuts, use caution when folding or handling paper and envelopes.
2. Use paper clips or staples to fasten papers together.
3. Be sure staples are fully bent.
4. Always use a staple remover to remove staples.

F. Electrical Equipment:

1. Use the nearest electrical outlet so power cords do not cross aisles or walkways.
2. A 3-foot work perimeter must be maintained around all electrical panels.
3. All electrical equipment should be properly grounded.
4. Periodically inspect electrical devices to ensure they are in safe working order.
5. Damaged or worn power cords or power strips should be replaced immediately.
6. Never open the outer casing of electric equipment.
7. Never link power strips together (i.e., “daisy chain”).



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G. Machines and Equipment:

1. Employees will operate machinery only after being properly trained by a competent person.
2. Machine operators shall dress suitably for the job.
3. Tie back long sleeves, neckties, or hair that may be caught in moving parts.
4. Maintain paper cutters in good working condition.
5. When using a paper cutter, keep fingers away from the blade. Secure the blade when not in use. Loose guards or springs should be repaired immediately.
6. When using or refilling a stapler, keep fingers away from the stapling platform.
7. Computer use may cause eye irritation, as well as pain in the lower back, neck, and shoulders. Proper ergonomic design should be tailored to prevent discomfort and carpal tunnel syndrome.

Factors to be considered for proper ergonomic design include:

Relationship of operator to the monitor:
Operator's posture
Keyboard position
Chair height and armrest position
Document holder location (if applicable)
Screen design and size
Printer location
Illumination:
Glare
Eye fatigue
Lighting and screen background contrast
Room Controls include:
Regular maintenance of overhead or lamp lighting
Light colored matte paint on walls and ceilings
Adjustable window shades
Indirect or task lighting

H. Storage

1. Use a stepladder to access overhead objects. Never stand on chairs, cartons, boxes, or similar items.
2. Do not store items within 18 inches of the base of a sprinkler head.
3. Heavy objects should be stored near floor level.
4. Store materials in cabinets or rooms designed for this purpose, and keep rooms and storage containers orderly.
5. Knives, box cutters, and scrapers should be sheathed before storage, especially in drawers. Never use razor blades to cut.
6. Store pointed objects, such as scissors, so that blades will not injure anyone.



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7. In general, flammable liquids and paint should not be stored in offices. Flammable liquids necessary for day-to-day office tasks should be kept in limited quantities. Store these materials in the original container. Keep away from heat.
8. Good housekeeping should be practiced at all times.
9. Appropriate non-safety clothing should be determined by managers and /or supervisors. Limitations on open-toed shoes, sandals, etc. and shorts should be evaluated through a job hazard analysis before implementation.

I. Miscellaneous:

1. Turn lights on before entering a dark room or area. If lighting is inadequate, report the location to a supervisor so lighting needs can be evaluated.
2. No employee should lift an object beyond his/her capability. When moving heavy items, obtain help from co-workers, or use hand trucks or dollies. If an object may cut or cause splinters, wear heavy cloth or leather gloves during handling.
3. Sharp edges, splinters, slivers, and burrs on furniture or equipment should be removed or sanded down. Protruding nails should be removed or bent down.
4. Do not place pencils behind ears.
5. If overhead work is being performed, such as changing light bulbs or fixtures, vacate the work space until the maintenance is finished.
6. Horseplay is prohibited at all times.
7. If a work assignment requires entering a hazardous area, appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) is mandatory.

Disclaimer:

Although every effort has been made to ensure this Chapter addresses all applicable regulations, it is the responsibility of each department to maintain compliance.