



fast facts

advancing safety, health, and workplace rights in the legislative branch

Safe Office Checklist Is Your Work Station a Safe Place?

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The Congressional Accountability Act of 1995 established an obligation for your employer to provide each legislative branch employee a safe and healthful place to work. The Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1971 (OSH Act) established similar requirements for employers in the private sector and the Federal executive branch of government. There is a general obligation [general duty] that has been established for these employing offices that they are to furnish to each employee a workplace free of recognized hazards that are likely to cause death or serious physical harm to their employees, and to comply with the standards established by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration under the OSH Act.

Each worker needs to stay alert to potential office safety and health hazards and bring them to the attention of a supervisor or manager to have them properly addressed. The following checklist will assist office workers, managers and others to help ensure a safer office area to work. Take this checklist through your office area to see if your workplace is in compliance.

Review your office emergency action plan or evacuation plan to make sure you know where to go if a building evacuation or a shelter-in-place emergency alarm is sounded in your building. If you have assigned duties under your office plan, make sure you know what they are and how to perform them. Make sure the exit routes out of the office are kept free and clear.

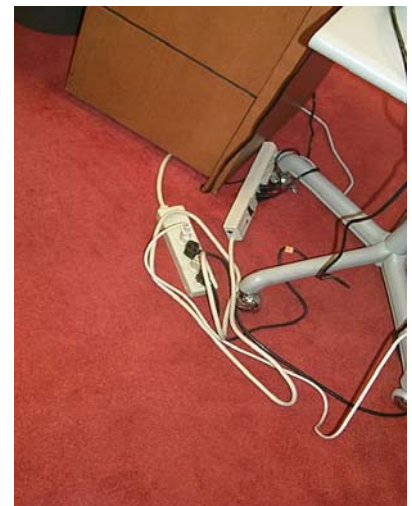


Appliance plug missing ground prong

Check your electrical wires for your office desk equipment and other office equipment to make sure that extension cords are not being used as permanent wiring connections. Make sure that each power strip or surge protector is plugged directly into a floor or wall outlet. Make sure each three prong plug has its ground prong.

Check your electrical outlets and the power cord plugs to make sure they are not damaged and the electrical wires are kept within its box. Check the wiring panel areas in modular furniture to make sure the covers are in place for keeping the electrical contacts properly covered.

Check your bathroom outlets near the sink and in other wet floor and counter areas to make sure that the electrical outlets have ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCI) at these locations. You may want to test these GFCIs to make sure that they trip properly to prevent electrical shock hazards. You need to press the test button and then after it trips push the reset on the GFCI so that it is put back into service.

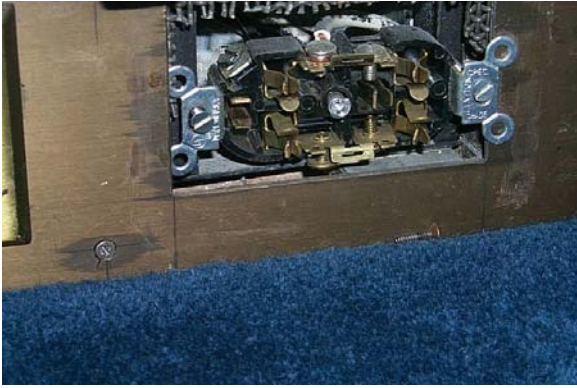


Daisy Chain of powerstrips

Check and make sure that if your office has an electrical panelboard with circuit breakers, the area in front of the electrical panel is to be kept clear with no obstructions so that in an emergency the circuit breakers can be reached quickly to kill the power to a given circuit. Nothing is to be in front of the panel so that the door can be fully opened and the electrician can access all circuit breakers and other parts within the panel.

If a portable space heater is used during cold weather in your work area, make sure it is plugged directly into a floor or wall outlet. Make sure there are no combustible materials placed near the heater, and the heater unit has a tip over-switch such that it will automatically shutdown if it is knocked over on its face to prevent a fire from occurring.

If a portable fan is used in your work area, make sure it is equipped with a fan blade guard with openings of a half inch in diameter or less.



Broken wall-out was being used



Poorly guarded fan



Blocked exit route

If a portable paper cutter is used in the office, make sure that it has a finger guard in front of the blade arm cutting area to prevent the fingers from getting under the blade.

Check to make sure that power cords, wires and phone cables do not run across or in a walkway or exit route pathway so as to prevent a tripping hazard from being present.

Check to make sure that carpet and rugs are secured and in good condition to prevent slipping and tripping. Make sure if any materials spill on the floor that can create a slipping or tripping hazard that they are promptly cleaned up.

Check to make sure that file cabinet drawers when being accessed do not block a walkway. Any file cabinet drawers that partially open into a walkway should not be left unattended and should be fully closed when access is no longer required.

Check when loading file cabinets to ensure that heavy items are on the bottom. Do not leave file cabinet drawers standing open. Drawers left open at the top of a file cabinet could cause the cabinet to tip and fall over. Drawers standing open can also cause a ‘strike against’ or laceration hazard if you or others get too close to the sharp edges or corners of the cabinet.

Make sure that overhead stored materials are kept stored in a secured manner. Any storage shelving being used to store materials or equipment must be secured to the wall or other means to prevent it and its stored materials from falling over on to a person.



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