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Loss Control and you

Office Safety

By **Mike Huss**
Loss Control Supervisor

We generally think of the “office” as a safer place than manufacturing or construction environments. The risk of an occupational injury for office workers is lower than that of employees involved in other industries. However, injuries can be just as painful, severe and expensive. One reason office safety and health programs are not more widespread are that many organizations believe office injuries are minor. As a result, office hazards go unrecognized and unmanaged, and do lead to serious injuries and property loss. An organization’s safety program cannot be fully effective if there is only partial participation by employees and management. A safety program that is not pursued in company offices probably will not be vigorously pursued in other areas of the organization.

Types of Disabling Injuries

In a recent study, falls were found to be the most common office incident and account for most disabling injuries. Falls from chairs occur when a person is sitting down, getting up, leaning back or moving about in a chair. Falls on the same level includes: slipping on wet or slippery floors and tripping over equipment, cords, damaged flooring or litter. Falls from elevations also occur when standing on chairs or other office furniture, and from ladders, loading docks, or other elevations.

Overexertion

Strain or overexertion occurs while employees try to move objects such as carrying or moving office machines, supplies, file drawers, trays, office furniture, heavy books or other loads. Reaching, stretching, twisting, bending down and cumulative trauma are often associated with these injuries.

Objects Striking or Struck by Employees

These injuries occur when employees are struck by falling objects such as; overbalanced file cabinets, file drawers pulled out too far, supplies and equipment sliding from shelves or cabinet tops, office machines and other objects dropped on feet while being moved, equipment that falls from a desk or rolling stand, and employees struck by doors being opened. Striking against injuries occur when employees bump into doors, desks, file cabinets, open drawers, baskets and other people while walking.

Caught in or Between

Injuries also happen when employees get caught in or between machinery and equipment such as; drawers, doors, windows, copying machines, shredders, etc. Knife edges on paper cutters can cause serious finger lacerations/cuts.

Miscellaneous

Other common types of office injuries include; foreign substances in the eyes, burns from spilled hot liquids, insect bites, electric shocks, chemical exposure from cleaning supplies, repetitive motion, and paper cuts.

The good news is that most office

hazards can easily be controlled by; being aware, working safely, and by eliminating or minimizing recognized hazards. Follow these tips to reduce potential injuries and accidents in your office:

- Ensure cords and/or communication cables are not stretched across aisles, doorways or between desks.
- Store heavy and most frequently used supplies/materials between the chest and knees to reduce strain type injuries.
- Use a material handling device (i.e. hand truck, dolly, cart, etc.) to move heavy or awkward items.
- Ensure work and storage areas are properly illuminated without shadows or glare.
- Adjust computer workstations so arms, wrists, legs, back and neck are always in a comfortable, neutral position. Avoid awkward postures or positions such as reaching, twisting, bending, slouching, etc.
- Interrupt repetitive tasks with regular rest breaks and include light stretching to promote movement and blood circulation.
- Minimize office noise by redirecting phone conversations, lowering music volume, isolating noisy office equipment, and keeping HVAC and other equipment properly serviced.
- Keep areas underneath desks clear as this can restrict movement.
- Avoid spills and wet areas on slippery, uncarpeted floors. Mark the hazardous area with a “wet floor” sign until the floor dries.
- Prevent file cabinets from tipping by; bolting, opening only one drawer at a time, and not overload-

ing drawers. Close drawers and doors with the flat of your hand.

- Ensure that all appliances and other electrical devices are properly protected, frayed cords can lead to serious electrical shock and fires. Don’t overload outlets or use extension cords as permanent wiring.
- Never use office chairs or other furniture as step stools.
- When using stairs: always use handrails, remove trash or debris, never carry items while ascending or descending, and never use stairs for storage.
- If there are blind corners consider installing convex mirrors to improve visibility. Don’t stack or pile “stuff” on top of filing cabinets which can block lines of sight.
- Know your building emergency procedures, evacuation routes, and assembly areas. Know the location, and how and when to use a fire extinguisher. Keep exits and aisle ways clear to allow for quick evacuation.
- Properly dispose of matches, ashes and cigarette butts. Maintain good housekeeping practices at all times.
- Conduct periodic facility inspections to make your office safe. Look around, and you will spot other hazards that can be easily fixed. When you see a hazard, don’t assume it is someone else’s responsibility to correct.

Health and Safety Calendar

By [Kim E. Coonrod](#)
Loss Control Manager

February 2013

[American Heart Disease Awareness Month](#)

March 2013

[Save Your Vision Month](#)

April 2013

[National Distracted Driving Awareness Month](#)

Safety News

By [Kim E. Coonrod](#)
Loss Control Manager

Did Your Policyholders Post the OSHA 300 Log Summary by February 1?

Employers with 11 or more employees are typically required to post a summary of their 2012 OSHA 300 logs for employees by Feb. 1. The summary, [OSHA Form 300A](#) must remain posted through April 30.

NIOSH Provides Tips for Avoiding Slips, Trips and Falls

A new [publication](#) from NIOSH addresses preventing slips, trips and falls in wholesale and retail trade establishments.

Slips, trip and falls – the third most common cause of lost-workday injuries in wholesale and retail trade – occur due to factors such as slippery surfaces; loose mats or rugs; poor lighting; employee fatigue; and inappropriate, loose or poor-fitting footwear, according to NIOSH.

The tips offered include:

- Ensure aisles are free of clutter and other tripping hazards.
 - Provide cleanup supplies at convenient locations in the facility.
 - Place water-absorbent mats near entrances and areas where water, ice or snow may be tracked onto the floor.
 - Train employees on identifying and preventing slip, trip and fall hazards.
- Employees can help by taking the following precautions:

- Push (rather than pull) carts to allow a better line of sight.
- Walk with caution and make wide turns at corners.
- Place warning signs in wet floor areas and remove them when floor is clean and dry.

Fall Protection Study - OSHA, NSC Case Study Focuses on Construction Falls

As part of the National Safety Council's alliance agreement with OSHA, NSC recently finalized a case study focused on preventing falls from heights in construction. Valuable information on hazard recognition, use of personal protective equipment, forklifts and scaffolds all can be found in this [free study](#).



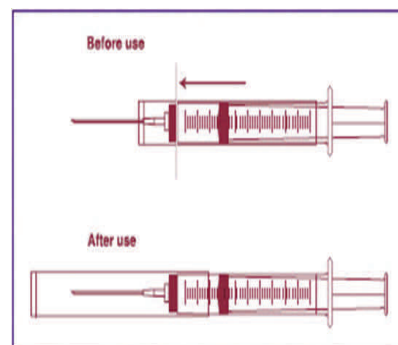
Lessons from Losses

By [Courtney Rosengartner](#)
Loss Control Technician

There are an estimated 800,000 needlestick injuries each year in the United States. Healthcare workers at risk must take precautions when exposed to bloodborne illnesses such as Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C and HIV. Injuries may occur during needle disposal, while administering injection or while handling trash. Most needlesticks are a result of unsafe devices and not the carelessness of the worker; therefore safer practices must be implemented to eliminate contact.

Naturally, not all injuries are preventable. However, the number of cases can be reduced by using needles with built-in safety features. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that 62-88 percent of sharps injuries can be prevented simply by using safer medical devices. These devices work to provide a barrier between the needle and the hand after use. Additionally, they are

easy to operate and will not interfere with patient care.



OSHA does not require the use of these specific devices, but the Bloodborne Pathogen Standard outlines that employers establish a written **Exposure Control Plan** to eliminate or minimize employee exposure and to be reviewed on an annual basis. OSHA also requires employers to record a needlestick injury on a **Sharps Injury Log** which contains information about the injury, type and brand of device involved and where and how the exposure occurred. The Bloodborne Pathogen Standard applies to all employers who have occupational exposure to blood or other potentially infectious materials (OPIM). However, employers with 10 or fewer employees are exempt from completing the [Sharps Injury Log](#).

Service Focus: Safety Video Library

By [Kim E. Coonrod](#)
Loss Control Manager

FirstComp offers a variety of loss control services? Many of these services are available to all policyholders, for free!

Last fall a new safety video library resource was introduced in partnership with WUMBUS Corporation. WUMBUS has developed one of the world's largest libraries of video training programs. Formats include both online streaming and DVD's with supplemental training tools.

Visit the [Loss Control page](#) on the FirstComp website or contact the Loss Control Department for more information., losscontrol@firstcomp.com.

For information about any of FirstComp's Loss Control Services, please call (888) 500-3344 or email losscontrol@firstcomp.com

Class Focus: Medical & Dental Offices



[Bloodborne Pathogens – Occupational Exposure - CDC](#)

[Develop a Comprehensive Safety and Health Program - OSHA](#)

[Ergo Tips – Back Pain - ADA](#)

[Ergo Tips – Hand Pain – ADA](#)

[Hand Hygiene - CDC](#)

[Medical & Dental Offices – A Guide to Compliance with OSHA Standards](#)

[OSHA Requirement that Apply to Many Health Care Employers](#)

[Other Hazards at Health Care Facilities - OSHA](#)

[Personal Protective Equipment - CDC](#)

[Recommended Infection Control Practices for Dentistry – CDC](#)

[Reducing Bloodborne Pathogens Exposure in Dentistry: An Update - CA Dept of Ind. Relations](#)

[Regulation Checklist for Medical and Dental Offices – Univ. of AL](#)

[Workplace Safety & Health Topics – Dentistry](#)