Serious but Unregulated Health Hazards in the Office

Most Tufts employees work in offices at least some part of every day. Although offices are usually safe and healthful places to work, all new employees at Tufts receive a booklet entitled, “Working Safely at Tufts: A Guide for New and Current Employees.” The Tufts Emergency Response Guide is another document intended to provide each employee with essential actions to take.

Each of these identifies potential hazards in the office environment and methods to reduce or eliminate those hazards.

At Tufts, office workers contact Tufts EHS staff to investigate many issues including strong or annoying odors and allergens such as mold, pollen or animal products which are referred to as indoor air quality concerns. Another concern is workstation design and potential ergonomic issues such as a sore back, neck or wrist. Moving heavy materials and equipment can lead to overexertion and strains with associated pain and discomfort.

In summary, among the most serious health concerns in the office are indoor air quality, workstation design and lifting materials. Surprisingly, OSHA has no regulations for any of these potential hazards. However, Tufts is committed to the intent of OSHA of “providing safe and healthful working conditions” for all of its employees, regulations or not. Where there are no regulations, Tufts adopts best practice policies and procedures to identify and control these threats to health.

Other office hazards are regulated by OSHA such as dry, smooth and unobstructed floors to prevent falls, electrical safety practices to prevent shocks and electrical fires and fire exist to encourage rapid and safe exit from the office in an emergency, where evacuation is the best decision.

Please contact the Campus EHS Manager for your campus to discuss any of these issues and any other health concerns you have.

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