SAFETY IN OFFICES AND ADMINISTRATIVE AREAS ISSUE

In Case You Haven't 'HERD' About...

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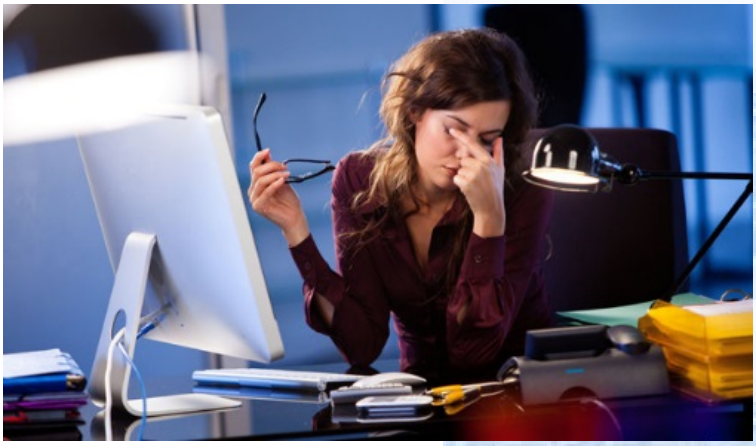
Simplifying Ergonomics: Microbreaks in the Office



TWO COMMON health risk factors in the office are glare from computer screens and repetitive motions from common tasks such as filing, filling envelopes, typing etc. Microbreaks have been used as a solution to both problems. Having many short breaks throughout the work day can be more beneficial than 2-3 long breaks.

Eye strain risks come from staring at a computer screen from hours on end.

When filling in that spreadsheet or writing that important email, try to remember to take short breaks from staring at the screen. The **20-20-20 rule** is a catchy way to help you remember this.

It simply states – Every 20 minutes, take a 20 second break, and look at something 20 feet away. You may have to look out a window or your office area to achieve the distance. For a next step while taking that 20 second break perform 5-10 slow blinks (think of the way your eyes close when you are struggling to stay awake). **Avoid looking at smartphones and tablets during these 20 seconds.** Finally, for those new to Tufts, familiarize yourself with exit routes, fire extinguisher locations, first aid kits and other applicable Fire and Life Safety items during this "microbreak for the eyes."

For general work: filing, mailing, sorting, there's a simpler rule: The **30-30-30 rule**.

Every 30 minutes take a 30 second break and do this for 30 days.

What to do during these 30 second Microbreaks:

- Stretch (Discuss applicable stretches for you with a medical professional)
- Grab a glass of water
- Change tasks, do some quick cleaning during a 30 second microbreak from filling envelopes
- Convert your sit/stand workstation to the alternative position

Contact your Campus EHS Manager if you have any other concerns with ergonomic issues.

This worker could stretch every 30 minutes or perform another task such as replenishing materials for mailings.

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Office Safety: Slips and Falls

THE VAST MAJORITY of employees and students at Tufts University spend time during the course of their workday in an office or conference room environment. This may be one of the contributing reasons why slips trips and falls in the office area are so prevalent. *Slips, Trips and Falls* are one of the leading employee accidents per the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA). Slips lead to falls, so the fall is often the primary cause of injury.

The usual cause for slips and falls is a spill on the floor (water and/or beverages) but there are other causes that we need to watch out for. For instance, most buildings have walk-off mats at the entrances, but those only go so far and as you move further into the building to get to your office or conference room you may transition to hard surface/tile floors. During inclement weather people entering the building may leave wet foot prints or drips on the floors. Sometimes they are difficult to see and before you know it you've walk right on them and depending on your foot wear, you may slip and fall.

Preventing slips and falls in the office environment takes a coordinated effort between employees, Facilities Services and Tufts EHS.

- Be on the look-out for wet-floor signs.
- Don't shake off your wet umbrella where other people will be walking.
- Clean-up any spills promptly.
- Avoid texting or emailing on your device while walking, especially on stairs.
- If you come across a potential slip hazard, make sure to report it to Facility Services, Tufts Police or Tufts EHS. Facility Services can dispatch someone to assess and clean-up if necessary.
- For small spills, you can always place some paper towels on the spill, marking spot for others as well as absorbing the liquid. Consider reporting it.

According to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA,) slips and falls are some of the most frequently reported accidents resulting in injuries. Tufts EHS is available to assist both employees and students who have concerns about slips and falls/walking and working surfaces.

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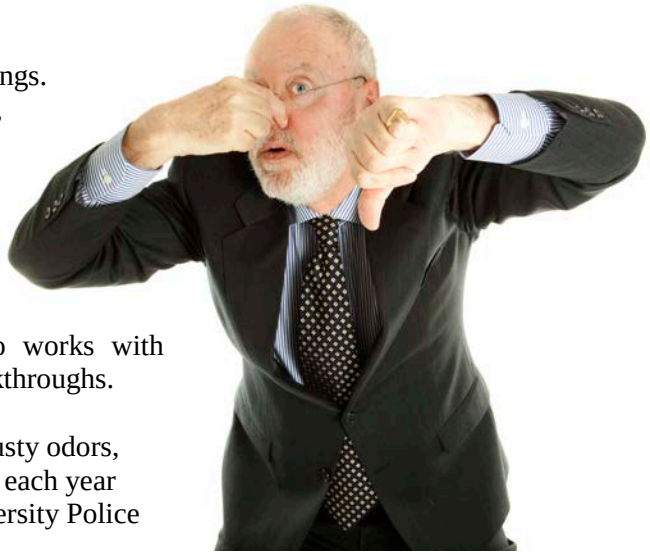
Air Quality in the Office

TUFTS INDOOR AIR QUALITY PLAN



Most Tufts employees and students learn and work inside buildings. Tufts has three types of buildings: office and classroom, industrial buildings with laboratories, shops, studios, and production kitchens and mixed use. The Tufts indoor air quality (IAQ) program focuses on office and classroom buildings where there are no industrial processes and there is an expectation that the air is safe, healthful and comfortable. Each campus at Tufts University has an IAQ coordinator to evaluate air quality. This is the campus EHS Manager who works with Facilities on IAQ problems that are reported or found during walkthroughs.

The most common IAQ problems at Tufts University are from musty odors, water leaks or chemical spills. Tufts EHS responds to many calls each year through direct calls 617-636-3615 or from calls to the Tufts University Police Department at 617-636-6691.

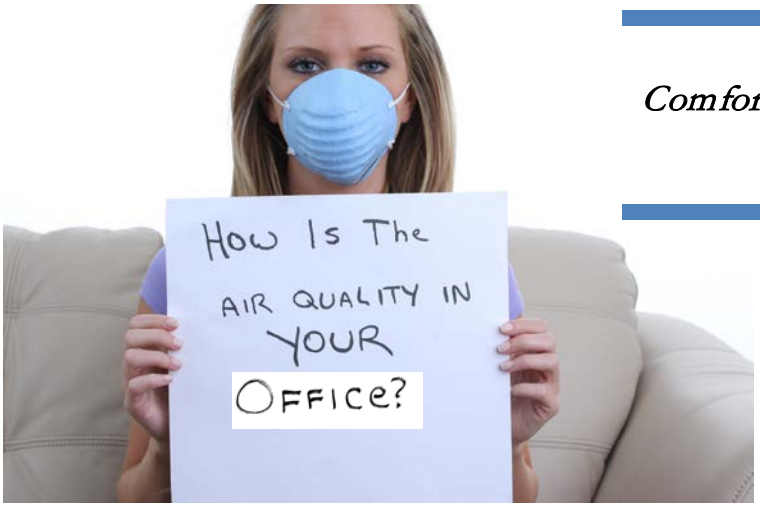
Comfort in an office is important so that staff can work safely and efficiently. At Tufts University, there are many offices where staff will share a room and thermostat. When one thermostat serves many individuals, following standards will allow for the most occupants to be comfortable. When staff have a problem with the temperature in their space, they should first call Facilities. Facilities can assess if the HVAC equipment is properly functioning and help identify the location of the nearest temperature control.

What is the recommended temperature for office environment?

Having a set temperature will help the most staff be comfortable. The American Society of Heating, Air Conditioning and Refrigeration Engineers (ASHRAE) has recommendations on temperatures that will assist in this.

Problem	Corrective Action	ASHRAE Recommendation
Temperature is too cold in winter	Staff are cold, resulting in many layers of clothing. Set temperature to ASHRAE recommendation.	68°F to 74°F
Temperature is too warm in summer	Staff are warm, resulting in staff perceiving air too stagnant or stuffy. Set temperature to ASHRAE recommendation.	74°F to 79°F

The ASHRAE recommendations differ by season because of the clothing occupants wear. It is best for staff to select a temperature within the range above and leave the thermostat set at that temperature. ASHRAE also recommends that humidity, when possible, is controlled to levels of 30 – 60%. In the winter, humidity levels can be as low as 10% due to heating. For some people, low humidity levels can cause dry or irritated eyes, contact lens discomfort, nose bleeds, and itchy or cracked skin.



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What are typical air quality problems in offices?

Tufts University EHS follows up on many IAQ reports. There are items that Facilities and EHS must work on but also things that staff can do to help improve their environment. They are presented in the table below:

General Problem	Description of Problem	Corrective Action
Fragrance Used in Office	One employee may use a perfume or body wash that impacts the airspace of another employee	Report issue to Manager, try to use odorants that cannot be detected about 3 ft. away
Cleaner Used in Office	Cleaner may create odor that is unpleasant	Most cleaners have been approved by EHS/Facilities. Try to not use a product with a strong odor
Water Leak	Water is impacting Building materials/equipment	Report to Public Safety so that the water leak can be stopped and impacted materials assessed
Potential Mold Identified	Mold can be found in some locations	Contact EHS for Evaluation
Odor in office	An unknown odor is within the office	Contact EHS for Evaluation

Indoor Air Quality Assessment

The IAQ coordinator will work with facilities to address occupant's questions. The items above are the most commonly reported. Odors in the office should be minimized so that most staff can work comfortably.

Things Are Heating Up in the Office

Misuse of electronic equipment in an office, whether it's a microwave or a printer, can potentially lead to a fire.

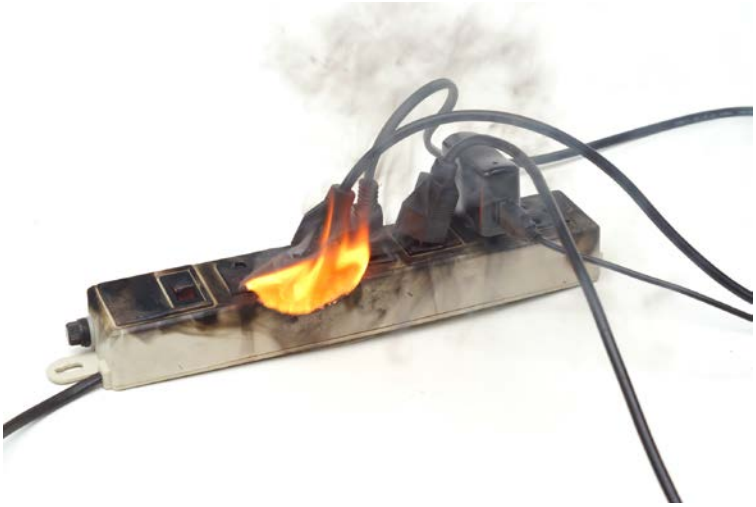
FROM COMPUTERS and printers to copier machines and refrigerators, offices are full of different types of electronic equipment. For the everyday office worker, electrical safety is most likely not on the minds of many. However, offices are not resistant to fires. From 2007- 2011, it is estimated that the United States Fire Departments responded to an average of 3,340 fires in office properties per year. 44% of these fires were related to cooking equipment, electronic office equipment, or electrical distribution. Of this 44%, 29% were related to cooking equipment and small cooking appliances such as coffee pots, popcorn makers, and microwaves.

A fire can occur whenever there is the right combination of oxygen, heat, and fuel. Misuse of electronic equipment in an office, whether it's a microwave or a printer, can potentially lead to a fire. It is important for office staff to have some knowledge on the prevention of office fires related to electronic equipment.

A common office electrical mistake is the misuse of power strips and high draw equipment. Power strips and surge protectors must never be plugged into other power strips, this is called "Daisy Chaining". When this occurs, the power strip which is plugged into the strip that's connected to the outlet, draws too many amps for the strip connected to the wall to handle. Power strips and surge protectors are not designed to be "Daisy Chained". Second, office staff may unknowingly plug common office "high draw" equipment (i.e. small cooking appliances, toasters, refrigerators, microwaves, space heaters) into power strips. By doing this, the equipment is drawing more amps than the power strip is rated for. Plug high draw equipment and small cooking appliances directly into the wall.

What does office electronic equipment need to be powered? Electricity. How does this electronic equipment get power? By plugging the office equipment into an outlet via a cord. Like anything, over time, cords can succumb to wear and tear and become damaged, torn, or ripped. A damaged cord with exposed wires presents a fire hazard. Exposed wires can send heat onto combustible surfaces, like floors, carpets, and paper. If you have a piece of equipment with a damaged cord, discontinue using it and get it replaced. You should never try to fix a cord yourself.

Extension cords are a common solution for when you need something plugged in and there are no available outlets nearby. National Fire Protection Association and OSHA codes require extension cords to be approved by recognized laboratories such as Underwriters Laboratories Inc.® (UL®). You'll see on the extension cord "UL® Listed". If the extension cord says "UL Approved," this is an incorrect reference and the extension cord should not be used. Office staff need to be diligent in purchasing extension cords to ensure the appropriate cords are being purchased. Extension cords are also only allowable in the workplace if they are considered temporary use, and for no more than 90 days.



If the extension cord says "UL Approved," this is an incorrect reference and the extension cord should not be used.

While a fire may not occur if there isn't the appropriate amount of oxygen, heat, and fuel, there is a possibility that these situations can lead to injury. Improper use of power strips, extension cords, and using damaged cords can lead to electrical burns. Although the cord or power strip may not be hot enough to catch on fire, it may be hot enough to cause a burn. Electrical burns can cause dermal injuries, damage to internal tissues, and can lead to heart rhythm problems (arrhythmias).

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

References:
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