

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

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Falling Down on the Job!

In 2008 roughly 1 in every 1,000 office workers experienced a work related accident. The most frequent type (32%) of accident was a fall. With this said, how does the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) regulations protect the office worker?

Some falls are caused by slippery floors, either because of water or ice or because of loose floor tiles or carpeting. OSHA 1910.22 requires that the floor shall be maintained in a clean and, so far as possible, a dry condition. Another regulation, OSHA 1910.141 states that the floor shall be maintained, so far as practicable, in a dry condition.

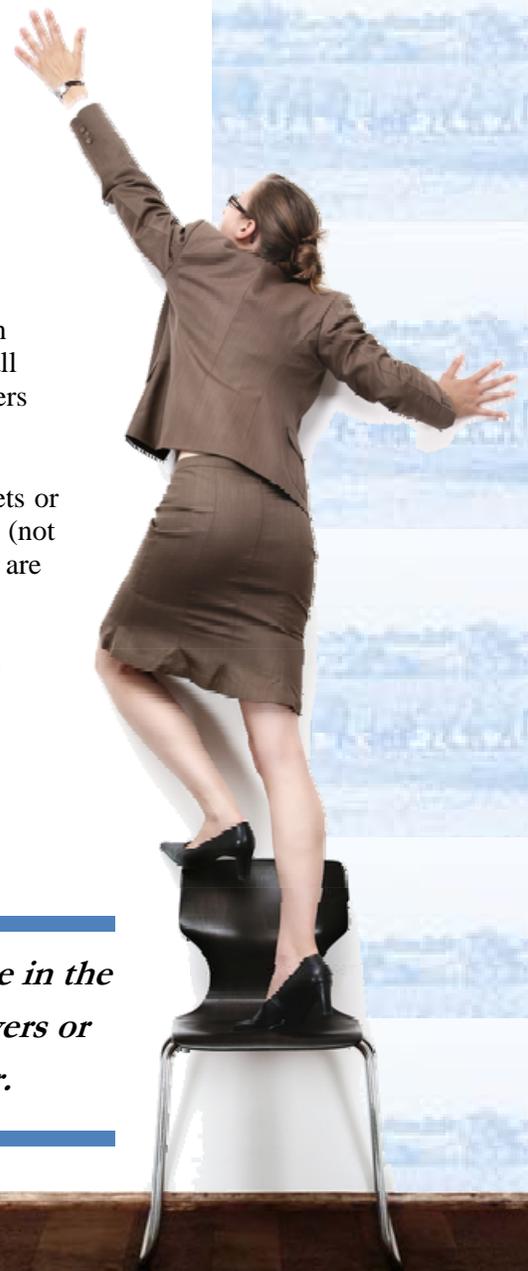
Some falls are caused by tripping over objects that are in the path of travel such as a waste basket, open file drawers or boxes of supplies such a boxes of printer paper. OSHA 1910.22 requires that all places of employment shall be kept clean and orderly and in a sanitary condition. OSHA 1910.176 requires that areas shall be kept free from accumulation of materials that constitute hazards from tripping OSHA 1910.37 requires that exit routes are free and unobstructed.

Some of these falls are caused when moving materials and equipment to and from shelves and cabinets. Chairs are for sitting and should not be used to stand on. Instead use a step stool or ladder for climbing. OSHA 1910.25 and 1910.26 addresses the correct selection and use of metal and wood stepladders. When selecting a ladder, recall that the top step cannot be used for standing, hence 4, 6 or 8 foot ladders may be needed.

Does every office need a ladder? No, if there are no shelves or cabinets or other objects mounted high enough above the floor that all employees (not just tall employees) can reach safely from the floor. Otherwise, ladders are needed.

While OSHA has multiple regulations to minimize falls in the workplace, attention to obvious trip and fall hazards should not be overlooked. Carrying supplies, wearing shoes with poor traction, running in the workplace and reading emails on your smartphone are all examples of behaviors that have resulted in trips and falls. Regardless, most if not all falls that occur to workers in offices can be prevented.

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Does Messiness Count when it comes to a Desk, Cubicle or Office?

IN 2011, Career Builder and OfficeTeam sponsored surveys of employers and employees on the subject of messy desks. Many employees attempt to defend their state of organization and clutter by quoting Albert Einstein in that “If a cluttered desk is a sign of a cluttered mind, of what then is an empty desk a sign.”

Career Builder surveyed 2,662 managers and 4,912 workers, and reported that 28% of managers state they are less likely to promote someone who has a disorganized workspace. Note: 72% would promote such a person. While 38% of managers state that piles of paper on a desk negatively impact their perception of the employee, 38% of the workers report that 50-100% of the desk is covered with work and other materials.



Office Team surveyed 500 Human Resources managers and found that 18% stated that neatness of any employees' desk or office greatly affects their perception of professionalism. Note: 82% do not associate neatness with professionalism.

Desks, cubicles and offices can be uncluttered and organized, cluttered and organized, cluttered and unorganized, uncluttered and unorganized. So which combination is best for safety? The three most common accidents in offices are falls, repetitive strain injuries and being struck by an object. Fires and electrical shocks also cause some injuries. Some degree of clutter control and neatness is essential to prevent these types of accidents: loose wires cause trips, space heaters cause fires directly or by overloading power strips (never plug heaters into power strips), excessive paper fuels fires, boxes block the path of travel and unsteady piles of books, files and old office equipment can fall off shelves onto heads of passersby.

Which combination is best for creativity?

In 2013 Kathleen Vohs, PhD, an industrial-organization psychologist at the Carlson School of Business and her colleagues devised a series of psychological experiments in which employees were asked to perform tasks while seated in neat offices and in messy offices. She concluded, “Disorderly environments seem to inspire breaking free of tradition which can produce fresh insights, while neat environments encourage convention and playing it safe.”

Does your office qualify as an **extreme workplaces**?

At one extreme, employees with extremely cluttered and unorganized workspaces are sometimes called hoarders. This type of severe clutter threatens the safety and health of the employee and needs professional intervention.

At the other extreme is the 5S Office. The Kyocera Corp has adopted the Japanese management system called 5S to make their offices extremely uncluttered and organized. The 5S system includes Sort, Straighten, Shine, Standardize and Sustain. In this system, every object on the desk and in the cubicle or office has a labelled and a designated space where it belongs. All drawers are labelled as to its contents. A 6S system would also include Safety.

In conclusion, where do you fit between these extremes of hoarding or total order? How much time (and mental energy) do you waste looking for documents, rearranging your desk or trying to recall the location of that critical file? Regardless of where you fit and how you choose to maintain your workspace, assure that basic safety principles are not compromised.

Deskercise for the Time Challenged Office Worker

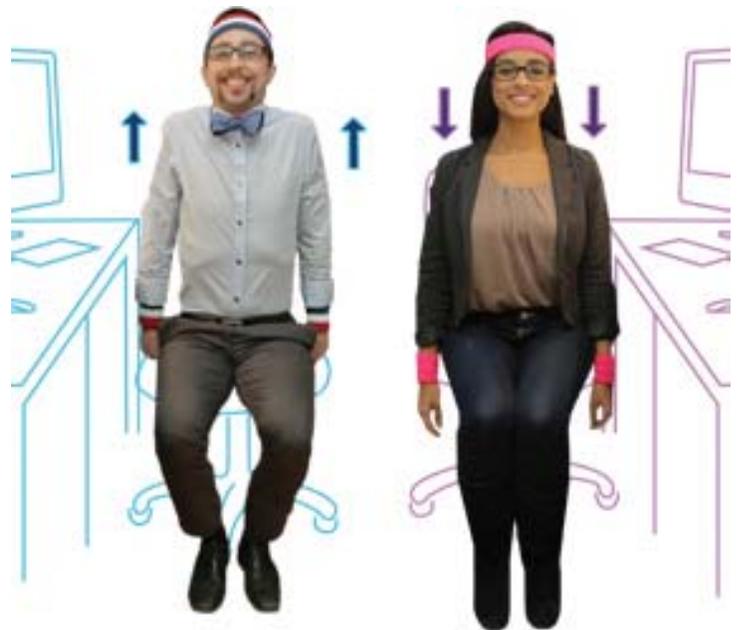
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THE TERM “DESKERCISE” is the merging of the office/desk and exercise. The adverse health effects associated with sitting at desk for 8-12 hours per day continue to be documented by health scientists. Add the time to commute to work and fitting exercise into a 24-hour day is challenging.

If you search Deskercise on YouTube or other web sources, you will find numerous “experts.” Unfortunately, these “experts” are often exercise physiologists, physical therapists, fitness trainers or former athletes who conduct “Deskercises” in tight-fitting athletic wear and are often using specialized equipment. However, for most workers, the idea of changing clothes or showering after Deskercises or fitting equipment into their office is simply not practical. Hence Deskercises must avoid creating too much perspiration and be possible wearing office clothing.

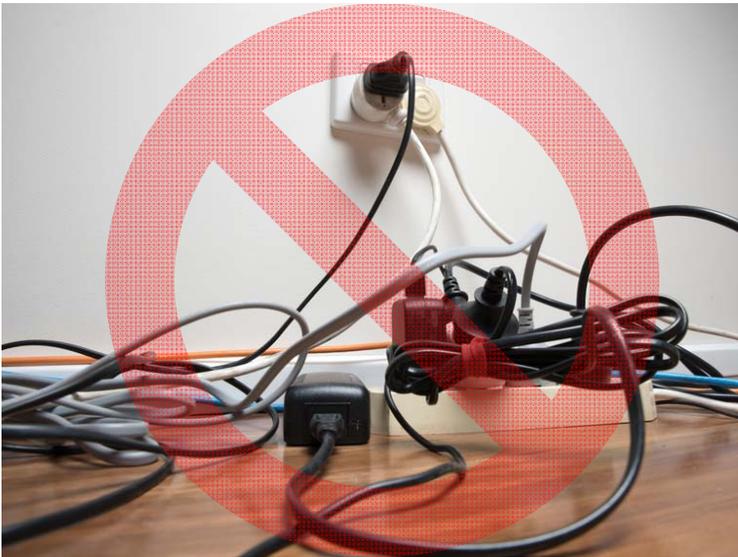
Experts may argue the exact benefits, however, most would agree that 150 minutes of moderate aerobic activity such as fast walking and climbing stairs along with strength activities such as the following 8 Deskercises will prevent you from being called a “Desk Doughnut!”

1. Paper pushups-with both hands on the desk (note: an uncluttered desk is required), walk your feet back to a 45-degree angle and do 12 push-ups.
2. Book press-hold the heaviest book (old encyclopedia?) with both hands behind your back and raise your arms over your head. Repeat.
3. Shoulder blade squeeze-stand and squeeze your shoulder blades together and open slowly. Repeat.
4. Chair squats-standing 6 inches in front of your chair, lower yourself until your butt hits the edge of the chair and then pop up. Repeat.
5. Wall sits-stand against a clean, smooth wall and squat down until your knees are at a 90-degree angle and push back up slowly (note: you may need to remove clutter such as boxes of paper)
6. Standing calf raises-stand with both feet together behind the desk chair and rise up on your toes and hold for 10 seconds, drop down and repeat.
7. Triceps desk dips-stand up beside the desk and face away from the desk, angle your feet away from the desk, then place your hands on the edge of the desk and lower your upper body and then raise up. Repeat.
8. Leg raises-while sitting, straighten your leg out horizontally and hold for 10 seconds. Repeat with other leg.



These 8 Deskercises have been recommended by the U. Wisconsin at LaCrosse and the American Council on Exercise. Note, that these Deskercises do not require the increasingly advertised office exercise equipment such as the under desk footcycle, the walking powered treadmill, the standing desk or the office elliptical. Unless you have storage space, this equipment may be more of a tripping hazard and limit space for the Deskercises.

Never Enough Electrical Wall Outlets: Power Strips and Extension Cords



Do not box in a power strip, leave space for heat to escape and air to circulate.

UNLIKE electrical standards for homes and apartments, there is no requirement that offices have a specific number of electrical wall receptacles for each 12 feet of wall space. Instead, the number of electrical wall receptacles is determined by the number and type of equipment that needs to be connected to the electrical system in the office. In addition, there are

OSHA requirements that limit the use of power strips and extension cords in the place of wall receptacles as follows:

1. “Daisy chaining” is where power strips are plugged into other power strips and /or into an extension cord. This is prohibited.
2. Extension cords are considered permanent wiring if they remain in place for 90 days or longer (while additional wall receptacles are designed and installed). This is prohibited.
3. Routing of power strip cords and extension cords through walls, or through doors is prohibited.
4. Power strips are designed for low-power loads such as computers, printers and AV equipment. The use of power strips for refrigerators, toaster ovens, microwave ovens or space heaters is prohibited.
5. Power strips and extension cords cannot be screwed/nailed/glued/ or stapled onto walls as permanent wiring even if it seems a good idea to reduce tripping hazards from a nest of wires on the floor.
6. All plugs with a ground wire must have a ground blade. These often are broken off to allow the plug to be inserted in an ungrounded outlet. This is prohibited.
7. Power strips can become warm or hot during normal use and require ventilation. Do not box in a power strip, leave space for heat to escape and air to circulate.
8. Power surge protection is built into some power strips and not others. Purchase only power strips that are UL approved and contain surge protection.

Office Lighting and the Aging Eye

“Inadequate lighting (in the office) can lead to visual discomfort, neck pain, headaches and excessive fatigue.”

-Dr. Van de Zonde



AS THE human eye ages, changes occur such as the lens becoming more dense, making seeing in dim light more difficult and the retina which contains light sensing cells becoming less sensitive. Hence the standards for office lighting need to be adjusted to accommodate the increased lighting needs of the older worker. At 45, the office worker may need 2 times the standard light intensity while at 60 this may increase to 3 times!

What are the adverse effects of insufficient light? According to Dr. Van de Zonde, principal scientist at Philips Lighting of Europe, “Inadequate lighting (in the office) can lead to visual discomfort, neck pain, headaches and excessive fatigue.”

There are potentially four sources of visible light in the office that have to be considered when assessing total available light in the work area: daylight from windows or skylights, general lighting, task lighting and light emitted from display devices such as a computer. In addition, each of these four sources then has up to three different effects on the work area: direct light on the task, indirect light and glare.

Adding to the complexity of providing the correct light intensity is the number of different types of lamps now available: incandescent, fluorescent, metal halide, quartz halide and LED. There are now LED lamps that mimic long

fluorescent tubes! Each of these types have different efficiencies and different hazards. For example, metal halide and quartz halide are extremely hot and can burn, cause fires and add heat to the office.

Measuring light in the office; How much light is enough? Too much?

Light intensity on a surface is measured in units called LUX (lx). The light intensity on a surface in full daylight is 10,000 lx while under starlight is .0011 lx. On a dark overcast night, natural light is reduced to .0001 lx. The American National Standards Institute (ANSI RP-1-12) recommends between 200 to 500 lx for offices for 20-year-old workers. In order to avoid increasing general illumination to improve visibility, office workers should seek adjustable task lights that can be moved around the desk or cubicle and provide lighting on the keyboard, book, or desk top. General lighting should provide 300 lx while the task lighting should add 200 to 400 lx or more to reach the 600 lx to 1500 lx required for the older worker.

Using task lights that are on timers can reduce energy use and heat production significantly. Of course more task lights require more electrical outlets and add more wires to trip over. Check out the HERD articles on Falls and Electrical Safety!