

Protecting Our Parishes, Missions, and Schools

Office Safety: What are the risks?

When working on a school campus or in a district administrative office, what are the risks of injury? The reality, supported by claims statistics, is that accidents/injuries occurred more frequently in educational settings than one might think. Injuries to administrative and clerical staff occur almost daily. The type of incidents range from getting a foot caught on computer cables underneath the desk, being struck on the head by objects falling from haphazard storage to tripping over objects in a walkway or aisle. Other incidents, like hitting your head on an open file cabinet drawer, turning over in a chair, or back strain as a result of reaching, from a sitting position, to retrieve something off the floor. All of these incidents have been reported in school district notice-of-injury forms.

To prevent injuries to you or others in the office, consider the following safety tips:

1. Keep all computer cables and electrical cords out of walkways. Use cable trays, binding wire or cord protectors to minimize tripping hazards.
2. While seated, do not tip a chair back onto two legs.
3. Keep pathways free from trip hazards, including clutter, cords/cables, storage boxes, loose paper and files.
4. Do not leave file cabinet drawers open and unattended or allow more than one drawer to be open at a time. Use handles to shut file cabinets and avoid slamming drawers when closing.
5. Always use proper lifting techniques. Whenever possible use handcarts to transport objects, especially for longer distances.



Use a rolling chair to carry a heavy box.

6. When storing materials on shelves, avoid stacking materials on the top of bookcases or file cabinets. To avoid "struck-by" accidents, do not store small loose objects out of sight on top of larger items.
7. While seated, do not lean over to pick up objects off the floor. Get out of chair and bend from the knees to retrieve objects.
8. Do not use chairs, furniture, or boxes for support or to stand upon when reaching for objects. To safely reach objects, take the time to get a ladder or step stool.
9. Do not leave open scissors, box cutters, razor blades, or other sharp objects lying around or loose in a drawer. Cover or close sharp blades and use trays to arrange and store them properly.
10. To avoid unnecessary stress to arms, wrists/hands, shoulders, and back, office furniture, workstation layout, computer and chair must be set up and adjusted ergonomically. Contact your supervisor for an ergonomic assessment of your work area.



Storage of loose objects on a shelf and placement of heavy objects on top shelves should be avoided.



While seated, do not bend to retrieve something from the floor. To avoid injury, get out of the chair and use proper lifting techniques.

In closing, failures to follow the preventive steps mentioned above have led to school district employee injuries. To avoid becoming an accident victim, be proactive – think.