

MSU-ES Dawg Tracks



July, 2008

Safety Tips: Avoid Office Accidents



With the intervention of the Mississippi Pride Initiative, the emphasis on office organization and cleanliness takes on a different personality. We shall all have a different look as we work and function in each of the areas throughout the Extension network.

This month we shall discuss office equipment hazards, materials storage, and electrical safety in the office, plus a review or overview of general housekeeping in the office.

The first subject we should discuss is electrical safety in the office. Electricity is an essential source of power in all modern and automated offices. As essential and necessary as it is, it is just as potentially hazardous and as we all know, can cause serious shock and burn injuries if improperly used or maintained.

ELECTRICAL HAZARDS COMMONLY FOUND IN UNSAFE OFFICES INCLUDE:

- **Ungrounded equipment -**
Most fixed equipment such as large, stationary machines must be grounded. Typewriters and coffee pots do not have to be grounded. But, much of our newer office equipment is manufactured with grounded, three-pronged plugs as an extra precautionary measure. We should never remove the ground prong from any three-pronged plug.
- **Insufficient or Overloaded Outlets -**
Overloading electrical circuits and extensive use of extension cords can cause fires.
- **Unsafe/Non-Approved Equipment -**
Employees should refrain from bringing heaters, individual coffee makers, radios, lamps, etc. to the office, especially if their wiring is judgmental or faulty or unless they have been approved by a quality testing laboratory.
- **Defective or Improperly Installed Cords -**
We should examine all electrical cords on a regular basis for fraying or exposed wiring. Bare wiring can and will cause shocks. Worn cords should be replaced.
- **Placement of Electrical Cords -**
Regular checks should be made to see that cords aren't lying against steam or heat radiators, walls, and windows. Be careful with cords behind and around furniture. Desk, tables, etc. can be squeezed tightly against walls, pinching the cords and/or bending the plugs in the socket.

WALKWAYS AND WORK AREAS:

We stress keeping walkways, aisles, etc clear for walking and transporting loads, but there are other potential problems as well.

Extension Cords -

Extension cords should be used on a temporary basis only. If you have to use them, they should be unplugged each night. If they have to be used for an extended period of time, they should be taped to the floor or a strip cover purchased to reduce the potential for a trip hazard.

Also, if the extension cord is to be a semi-permanent set up, then arrangements should be made to install a plug to eliminate the extension cord.

Plugs -

- When removing a plug from an outlet, pull the plug by the plug itself and not by the cord. Never pull by the cord.

EQUIPMENT:

- Disconnect all electrical machines before cleaning, adjusting or applying flammable solutions.
- If guards have to be removed to make adjustments or repairs to the equipment, be sure to replace them before testing the machine or returning it to service.
- All electrical panels and doors must be kept closed.
- Clearing access to all electrical panels is critical, as obstructions or obstacles stacked in front could prohibit you from gaining access to the breakers in case of an emergency.

OFFICE FIRE PREVENTION AND SAFETY:

- Heat-producing equipment such as copiers, printers, hot plates, microwave ovens, etc. should be located so that no flammable materials are in close range.
- Electrical appliances - All electrical appliances should be turned off each night. three-pronged plugs and outlets (grounded) should be used for all appliances.
- Electrical equipment - If electrical equipment malfunctions or emits a strange odor, disconnect it and call the pertinent maintenance personnel.
- Extension cords - Again, keep cords clear of doorways and areas where they can be stepped on and the insulation chafed, along with the creation of a slip, trip or fall hazard.
- Combustible materials - Isolate all combustibles, such as boxes, paper, etc away from ignition sources.

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Excerpts: www.slosipe.org

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