

# **SECTION 3(14)**

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## **OFFICE SAFETY**

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## Introduction

Safety in the office, like everywhere else, does not just happen. It is the result of planning and individual effort. Many people believe that office injuries are inconsequential. This is not so. Office accidents account for some 47% of all accidents that occur. The reason they are not more publicised is because they tend not to be of a serious nature, nonetheless, they still hurt. The persons most vulnerable to accidents are new workers, particularly the younger ones.

The most common causes of injury in offices are:

- **Trips and falls** as the result of standing on objects rather than stepladders etc, trailing wires, poorly lit stairwells etc.
- **Over-exertion** - paper is a heavy commodity and some office equipment, even if not heavy, may be an awkward shape to carry.
- **Bumping** into cabinets that are poorly sited, doors that are left open, and chairs left in aisles etc.
- **Struck** by loading cabinets from the top, too many drawers open, at once, things stored at high level.
- **Cuts and stabs** by razor blades, knives, staplers etc.

The responsibility for health and safety in the office lies with the office manager/supervisor but, without the co-operation of all employees, accidents will occur. It is important, therefore, that every employee should know and accept their own part in promoting health and safety.

The following is a general guide and does not take into account specific, local peculiarities. Any situation that arises that is not covered should be reported to the senior manager, who will endeavour to solve any problems. Advice and assistance can also be obtained from the Corporate Health and Safety Advisers in Corporate Services.

### Office Based Line Manager

The line manager/supervisor is responsible for the health and safety of people working for them, be they permanent, temporary or contractually employed staff and will:

- (a) Familiarise him/herself with the Council's health, safety and welfare policies and ensure that they are brought to the notice of all employees under their control.
- (b) In accordance with Appendix B ensure that safe systems of work are in place and that hazards and risks are evaluated.
- (c) Ensure arrangements are in place to check that all non corporate office machinery is serviced and maintained as recommended by the manufacturer.
- (d) Ensure that staff required to use office machinery are trained in its use and are not permitted to attempt to carry out cleaning or repairs unless competent and authorised so to do.
- (e) Ensure that areas of the office under direct control are laid out and maintained to ensure safety of staff and visitors.
- (f) Ensure that a fire risk assessment has been completed and that all fire fighting

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equipment is maintained, fire exits kept clear and fire drills organised on a regular basis.

- (g) Ensure that first aid facilities are adequate and available and that staff are notified of the first aid arrangements during induction (see <http://schools.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/Assets/first-aid.pdf> ).
- (h) Ensure that all accidents and incidents are investigated and reported to the Corporate Health and Safety Adviser in accordance with the incident reporting system (see <http://schools.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/Assets/incident-reporting.pdf> ).
- (i) Ensure all staff work safely and do not take unnecessary risks.
- (j) Ensure all necessary welfare provisions are provided and maintained.
- (k) Comply with the corporate procedure for the removal of rubbish.
- (l) Induct all new employees on their first day of employment into the Council's health, safety and welfare procedures. Paying particular attention to young or inexperienced workers and disabled staff.
- (m) Set a good personal example.

Remember: managers and supervisors are also employees.

**Office Based Employees**

All office based employees are reminded of their duty under Sections 7 and 8 of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974. Whilst in the office employees will:

- (a) Familiarise themselves with the Council's Health, Safety and Welfare policies and procedures, and carry out work in accordance with their requirements.
- (b) Ensure that the clothing and particularly footwear they wear at work is suitable from a safety point of view.
- (c) Do not try to use, clean, repair or maintain any office equipment or machinery for which they have not received full instruction or training.
- (d) Report any defects in office equipment or machinery immediately to their supervisor.
- (e) Find out from their supervisor the position of the first aid box and, where appropriate, the name of the First Aider.
- (f) Ensure that they know the procedure in the event of a fire.
- (g) Report any accident or damage, however minor, to their supervisor as soon as is reasonably practicable.
- (h) Ensure that corridors, office floors, doorways, etc, are kept clear and free from obstruction.
- (i) Do not attempt to lift or move, on their own, articles or materials so heavy or awkward as likely to cause injury.
- (j) Do not attempt to reach items on high shelves unless using steps or a properly designed hop-up/kick stool: do not improvise or climb on desks, chairs etc.

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- (k) Identify hazards and bring them to the attention of your supervisor.
- (l) Warn new employees, particularly young people, of known hazards.

**Information and Instructions to Staff**

All staff should be issued with a copy of the "Instructions to Staff" document by the appropriate manager/supervisor. See Appendix A.

**Office Safety Instructions to Staff****Cables**

Ensure that all telephone and electrical cables do not trail across the floor.

**Defects**

Any defective furniture, equipment, fixtures structures or hazardous conditions are to be reported to your supervisor as soon as possible. On becoming aware of the hazard, appropriate remedial action to minimise the danger to other employees should be undertaken within your competence.

**Electrical**

If you suspect an electrical fault, switch off the machine or appliance and report it immediately to your supervisor. Check the condition of any electrical leads regularly to ensure that no visible wear has occurred. If it has, report the mater to your supervisor. Under no circumstances should a machine or appliance be used upon which an electrical fault has been found until it has been repaired. All electrical repairs and installations should be carried out by a competent person.

**Filing Cabinets**

Do not leave drawers open. Be careful when opening top drawers as this may cause the cabinet to topple if the lower drawers are empty. Filing cabinets should be filled from the bottom drawer up.

**Fire**

Familiarise yourself with the fire procedure and all means of escape. Smoking is not permitted in any Council Building.

**First Aid**

The use of First aid materials must be recorded and materials can be obtained from personnel listed on staff notice boards.

**Floors, Corridors and Staircases**

Report any areas of lose or defective floor covering to your supervisor.

**General working conditions**

You should ensure that you do not take any action that detrimentally affects the working environment of you or your colleagues, eg adjustments to heating, lighting or ventilation.

**Guarding of machinery**

Ensure that:

- all guards are fitted to a machine prior to use
- you do not operate any machine unless you have been given adequate instruction in its use

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- under no circumstances you tamper with any interlock or safety device which has been fitted.

No machine should be used which has a known mechanical fault, the fault should be notified to your supervisor.

Any faulty or dangerous machine should be labelled as such and not be used. If possible the machine should be removed to a safe place or, alternatively, the fuse should be removed from its plug so preventing use.

When a major fault occurs on a photocopying machine contact ICT helpdesk on 01344 351100 or email at: [ICT.HelpDesk@Bracknell-Forest.gov.uk](mailto:ICT.HelpDesk@Bracknell-Forest.gov.uk)

When a jam occurs on a photocopying machine ensure you follow the manufactures instructions.

**Heavy objects**

Do not move any object that you consider being outside your capabilities and if so always obtain assistance (see <http://schools.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/Assets/manual-handling.pdf> )

**High level storage**

The storage of boxes, files etc on top of high cupboards and shelving can be a danger and should be avoided. Care must be taken when moving such boxes, etc and a ladder or suitable standing block must be readily available.

**Ladders etc**

Do not climb on chairs or desks to reach high level objects, always use a suitably constructed standing block or stepladder (see <http://schools.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/Assets/safe-use-of-ladders.pdf> ).

**Lifts**

Care should be taken when entering or leaving a lift as the doors can cause bruising. In the case of an emergency the alarm procedure is posted in the lift. Do not alight from the lift unless it is at floor level. Under no circumstances enter a lift motor room or shaft.

**Lighting**

Report any lighting defects or failures to your supervisor.

**Obstruction**

Do not place anything on the floor or in or across a passageway in such a way as to cause an obstruction or a trip. Obstructions should be reported to your supervisor.

**Hazardous Substances**

Under no circumstances are these materials to be handled or used unless you have received adequate information, instruction and training in their use. If in any doubt ask your supervisor.

**Spillages**

Immediately clear up any spilt material as these can cause people to slip.

### **Visual Display Units/Display Screen Equipment**

You are referred to the Council's Health, Safety & Welfare Manual (see <http://schools.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/Assets/display-screen-equipment.pdf> ).

**Office Safety Inspection Checklist**

Department: ..... Location: .....

Date of inspection: .....

Where offices are shared all line managers and facilities staff will need to work together to answer the questions. Every office is different and many of the questions below may not be applicable.

	YES	NO	NA	Comments/Action
<b>Administration</b>				
Is the Council's Health, Safety and Welfare Manual available to all employees? (Available via following link: <a href="http://boris.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/corporate-services/human-resources/health-and-safety-health-and-safety-at-bfbc/health-and-safety-manuals/corporate-health-and-safety-manual.htm">http://boris.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/corporate-services/human-resources/health-and-safety-health-and-safety-at-bfbc/health-and-safety-manuals/corporate-health-and-safety-manual.htm</a> )				
Is the local policy statement issued to all staff?				
Where necessary are codes of safe working practice available to relevant staff?				
Are there sufficient first aid facilities for staff numbers?				
Are there sufficient first aiders for number of staff?				
Is the Incident Report Form available for employees? (Available via the following link: <a href="http://schools.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/Assets/incident-reporting.pdf">http://schools.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/Assets/incident-reporting.pdf</a> ).				
Is the "Health and Safety Law" Poster prominently displayed?				
<b>Workplace</b>				
Are any of the following a potential risk?				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Heating</li> <li>• Lighting</li> <li>• Ventilation</li> <li>• Overcrowding</li> </ul>				

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• Noise				
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	YES	NO	NA	Comments/Action
Are there sufficient toilet and washing facilities for employees?				
Is there sufficient storage or filing facility?				
Are means of access to work areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Kept clear of obstruction?</li> <li>Well maintained?</li> </ul>				
Are measures taken to reduce the number of trailing leads?  Do they work?				
Is there a traffic system for the site?  Is it enforced?				
<b>Chemicals</b> Are hazardous substances assessed in accordance with the CoSHH Regulations?				
Are all assessments recorded?				
Is a register of assessments kept?				
Is it published and freely available?				
Are storage facilities adequate?  Are they used?				
<b>Fire</b> Is there a copy of the fire risk assessment readily available on site?				
Are fire notices fitted to adjacent to all fire alarm call points?				
Are responsibilities in the event of emergency or evacuation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Allocated?</li> <li>Are they inspected annually?</li> <li>Are employees trained in their use?</li> </ul>				

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	YES	NO	NA	Comments/Action
Are fire exits: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Kept clear from obstruction?</li><li>• Operable without the use of a key?</li><li>• Clearly signed?</li></ul>				
Is the fire alarm system regularly tested?				
Are evacuation procedures carried out at least twice a year?				
How many defects were found on this inspection?  How many defects were found on the last inspection (including those outstanding from previous inspections)?  How many of these are still outstanding or require action?				