

In a municipality, it's easy to imagine an injury happening in the high hazard areas – Public Works and Fire Departments. But there are a surprising number of injuries resulting in long-term absences, that happen to office staff.

Many of these injuries could be avoided if workers and supervisors recognize the risks and implement simple modifications to eliminate or minimize them.

Although not the only cause, injuries caused by slips, trips and falls are the most common. Several hazards contribute to those injuries, and most could be avoided through appropriate risk controls, and employee education.

GET RID OF THE CLUTTER



Boxes, files and various items piled beside desks or in hallways or walkways can cause a tripping hazard. Keep cords corralled, to prevent them from becoming a hazard.

**USE A STEP-STOOL OR LADDER,
NOT A CHAIR**

Standing on chairs, particularly rolling office chairs, poses a significant fall hazard. Stepstools and step ladders need to be fully opened and placed on level, firm surfaces.

MAINTAIN A CLEAR LINE OF VISION

Workers can collide when making turns in hallways and around blind corners or cubicles. Removing this hazard may include installing convex mirrors at regular “intersections”.

AVOID SLIPPERY FLOORS

Carpeting and skid-resistant surfaces will help to reduce slip/falls. This is especially true at entrances, where wet shoes can lead to slips and falls on tile or linoleum surfaces.



SAFE STACKING

Never stack heavy items on higher shelves. Not only could this pose a significant hazard in an earthquake, but removing those heavy items could cause a strain injury. Keep large boxes and heavy items close to the ground when storing them, and use mechanical means or get help if they need to be moved. Make sure shelving is secured to the wall.

INSPECT SPACE HEATERS

Many office staff may have space heaters under their desks to keep warm in winter. These must be approved for commercial use, and must automatically shut off if tipped over.

**RECOGNIZE THE SYMPTOMS OF
MUSCULOSKELETAL DISORDERS**

Pay attention to any pain, fatigue, numbness or weakness, as these may be signs of an ergonomics problem and the start of a more serious MSD.

