

OFFICES

(See also: [COSHH\(19\)](#); [Display Screen Equipment\(20\)](#); [Electricity\(24\)](#); [Electrical Equipment\(22\)](#); [Fire\(26\)](#); [Lifts and Hoists\(46\)](#); [Lighting\(47\)](#); [Seating\(72\)](#); [Sick Building Syndrome\(74\)](#); [Slips and Trips\(77\)](#); [Smoking Policies\(78\)](#); [Stress\(82\)](#); [Storage of Goods\(81\)](#); [Workplace Health, Safety and Welfare\(92\)](#))

INTRODUCTION

Although the office may not be a particularly hazardous place in which to work it would be a mistake to think that accidents never occur. Office workers have been trapped in fires, they have fallen from stepladders, they have been electrocuted and suffered ill health from sick building syndrome, for example. There is, therefore, always an element of hazard that must be identified and guarded against by effective precautions and by safe working practices. Typical hazards are indicated below:

SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS IN THE OFFICE

1. Slips, trips and falls

- condition of the flooring or its covering
- obstructions (boxes, trailing cables etc)
- spillages
- condition/lighting/handrails of staircases
- condition/checking of ladders and step ladders
- guarding of raised storage areas/mezzanine floors

2. Space requirements

- sufficiency of floor area, height and unoccupied space (at least 11 cubic metres per person in general)

3. Workstations and seating

- suitability for the person and for the work to be done there
- footrests for seats where necessary

4. Cleanliness and waste materials

- good housekeeping standards
- regular cleaning and removal of waste materials
- surfaces to be capable of being kept sufficiently clean

5. Environmental conditions

- sufficient ventilation
- reasonable temperature (normally at least 16oC; sufficient number of thermometers to be provided)
- suitable and sufficient lighting

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6. Fire safety

- means of escape in case of fire and suitable notices
- means of giving warning of fire
- fire fighting equipment
- periodic tests, drills etc.

7. Electrical safety

- periodic check on the fixed electrical system
- procedures to maintain electrical equipment including user checks, formal visual inspection and combined inspection and testing (where necessary).

8. Machinery/equipment

- appropriate guards should be maintained/used
- servicing contracts; safe maintenance of equipment
- particular hazards from equipment e.g. photocopiers - ultra violet light, ozone and heat
- Display Screen Equipment Regulations - control such risk by proper maintenance/servicing, correct usage and location.

9. Handling, lifting and carrying

- precautions/instructions for carrying boxes, equipment etc.
- avoidance of manual handling involving a risk of injury

10. First aid

- sufficient and suitable first aid personnel, equipment and facilities
- suitable notices in the workplace

11. Welfare facilities

- suitable and sufficient sanitary accommodation, washing facilities, accommodation for clothing, and rest facilities
- adequate supply of drinking water, cups etc.
- changing facilities where necessary
- rest area to protect non-smokers from discomfort caused by tobacco smoke
- where meals are regularly eaten in the workplace, suitable and sufficient facilities to do so should be provided

12. Hazardous substances

- COSHH assessment may be required

13. Violence at work

- are your staff at risk from violence when handling/transporting cash or dealing with the public?

ADDRESSING HAZARDS

- Carry out risk assessments where required
- Ensure proper maintenance and use of all equipment
- Allocate responsibility for health and safety to a nominated (senior) member of staff
- Ensure all staff are aware of office hazards and are either informed, instructed or trained, if necessary, in risk control procedures

CHECKLIST

- | | | |
|---|-----|----|
| 1. Are your offices covered by:- | | |
| (i) a health and safety policy statement
(if required) | YES | NO |
| (ii) risk assessments | YES | NO |
| 2. Have you established safe working practices
and procedures to control risks in an office
environment? | YES | NO |
| 3. Do your offices comply with the Workplace
(Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992? | YES | NO |
| 4. Have you informed, instructed or trained your
staff (as appropriate or as necessary) with
regard to hazards in the office? | YES | NO |

REFERENCES/FURTHER DETAILS

- *1. Booklet L24 - Workplace health, safety and welfare.
(Approved Code of Practice)(HSE) ISBN 0 7176 0413 6.
- *2. Booklet - Safety in offices and shops (ROSPA)
- *3. Booklet - 'Is my office safe?' - a handbook for supervisors
(HMSO)
- *4. HSG90 - VDUs - An easy guide to the regulations (HSE).
ISBN 0 7176 0735 6.
- *6. HSG132 - How to deal with sick building syndrome (HSE).
ISBN 0 7176 0861 1.
- **7. Leaflet IND(G)160(L) - Maintaining portable electrical
equipment in offices and other low-risk environments (HSE)
www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg236.pdf
- **8. Leaflet IND(G)173L - Officewise (HSE)
www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg173.pdf

Contact Details

1. Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (ROSPA),
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- * Available to view by prior arrangement at Nuneaton and Bedworth
Borough Council, Environmental Health Services, Council House, Coton
Road, Nuneaton. CV11 5AA
 - ** Free copy available from Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council at
the above address.

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