

At the appliance end, make sure the device that secures the cord is intact at the cabinet and is preventing chafing. A conductor within a cord can partially break if the cord is flexed excessively. This is hard to detect, but it can cause heating inside the cord.



Avoid overloading circuits. Instead submit a service request for installation of additional outlets. Extension cords should only be used as a temporary measure (≤ 90 days) while you await additional receptacles.

Extension cords should be at least one gauge heavier (which means one even number lower) than the appliance cord, and they must be hard service--SO or SJ--type. Power strips are acceptable for simultaneous use of several low-current devices such as computers and their peripherals. The strips must have built-in over-current and voltage surge protection. Never use lamp ("zip") cord for an extension cord.



"Zip" cord

Never place cords beneath carpet. This can cause overheating of the wire insulation and cord damage that cannot be seen until it starts a fire. Keep appliances away from water. Avoid hanging houseplants above electrical appliances.

FIRE HAZARDS

Good housekeeping is essential for the prevention of fires in an office. Keep ignitable materials such as paper away from heat-producing appliances. Do not turn kitchenette areas into file rooms unless you remove heat-producing appliances or have them disconnected by Facilities Management. Know where the nearest fire extinguisher is. Do not use any open flame without discussing it first with the Fire Safety Officer. Burning candles are not allowed in campus buildings unless you have an open burning permit. Where candles are desired, consider using flameless candles. For more info: <https://www.wm.edu/offices/facilities/services/safety/firesafety/candle/index.php>



Use safe practices in cooking areas. Don't use stove tops for storage. Make sure burners and ranges are turned off when not in use. Clean up spills promptly.

Electrical cabinets & circuit-breaker panels must have a 3-foot clearance. This allows quick access in an emergency and provides ample working clearance for technicians. This is a fire-code requirement. Avoid positioning furniture or office equipment within the 3-foot zone.



Space heaters cause burns and fires. And, oftentimes a space heater is overkill. Consider using a heated floor mat beneath your feet. They are safer and draw less current.

CHEMICAL HAZARDS

Some office chemicals have hazardous ingredients. If you have a hazardous material in the office then you must have its material safety data sheet (MSDS) on hand. See: <https://msdsmanagement.msdsolnline.com/ViewerSite/AllProducts.aspx>



You must also ensure that the label remains intact and legible on chemical containers. Most paints, adhesives, reprographic chemicals (e.g. liquid and dry toner), and similar products cannot be disposed of in regular office trash or poured down the drain. If you need to discard office chemicals, consult your EH&S staff for proper disposal options. DO NOT bring chemical products from home into the office.

EMERGENCY EVACUATION PLANS

Find the nearest evacuation map for your building, and locate designated primary and secondary exits. Also know the location of your staging or "muster" area once you leave the building for fire



The College of
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Office Safety



For additional information contact:

Director, EH&S	221-2146
Safety Engineer	221-2288
Safety Specialist	221-7629
Fire Safety Officer	221-1745

The EH&S Office's web page is at:
<http://www.wm.edu/facman/safety/>



drills or other emergencies.

OFFICE SAFETY

Although we may not typically consider the office environment hazardous, a surprising number of accidents and injuries occur there. Some of the common types of hazards and concerns include falling objects; slips, trips and falls; fires; cumulative trauma disorders; electrical shock; exposure to hazardous chemicals; and back injuries. Good housekeeping, common sense and paying attention to details are often all we need to do to adequately control these hazards.

SLIPS, TRIPS, & FALLS



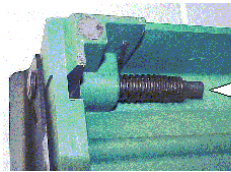
Slips, trips, and falls are the most common cause of injury. Obstacles in the walkway, defects in the carpet, and irregular or wet floor surfaces are the main causes. Here's what you can do to avoid them:

- Choose your footwear to suit your work environment. Soles should have sufficient traction for the floor surfaces encountered throughout the workday. Decorative features on shoes can become entangled and cause a fall. Cut off excess length from laces.
- Never run in the office. The completion of even the most important task is never worth the risk of running into a co-worker or falling.
- Never stand on chairs or your desk to reach something.
- Avoid walking and reading at the same time.
- Keep your egress path clear. Don't store supplies & equipment in the hallways and aisles.
- Electrical cords and other cables should be kept out of the walkway or protected by cable molding.
- Stairwells must be kept clear of clutter. The stair treads and handrails of the stairs should be kept in good repair.
- Wet floors and serious trip hazards need interim warning devices such as cones or signs.

LACERATION & PUNCTURE HAZARDS

Cuts are an obvious hazard when handling scissors, knives, paper cutters, or even just paper. There are less obvious laceration hazards from sheet-metal parts such as edges within file cabinets or along metal shelving. Be careful as you are removing drawers or otherwise grasping rarely exposed surfaces.

Plastic laminates on furniture can detach or break, exposing sharp points or edges. If you are aware of a sharp edge, try to pad it or place fiber-reinforced tape over it as an interim measure. Submit a service request for repair. If you use utility knives, choose one with a retractable blade.



Guillotine-type paper trimmers are particularly hazardous. Keep your fingers well clear of the blade path when using the

trimmer. Keep the cutter arm locked when not in use, and ensure the tension device will hold the arm securely in the up position. If not, then adjust the tension spring on the underside of the cutter.

FILE CABINETS, STORAGE SHELVES AND BOOKCASES

Storage on the top of a cabinet or shelf unit should be stable and limited in height to a single object that does not extend beyond the shelf or surface below. The base of a freestanding cabinet or shelf should be level and supported across its full width and depth. Keep storage at least 18 inches away from ceilings and fire sprinkler head.



Never leave a file drawer open and unattended. This can cause a trip & fall hazard. File cabinets with more than one open drawer may tip.

Think carefully about your needs for shelving before you order it. If you are storing

heavy books across the full width of the shelf, a particleboard shelf will likely sag in time, and possibly collapse. Consider metal or plywood shelving instead.

CLIMBING, REACHING & LIFTING

Chairs are entirely unsuitable as ladders or step stools. You can be permanently disabled or killed by a fall from a chair. Boxes or other makeshift arrangements are equally dangerous. Use the right tool for the job; get a ladder or a stool. Strains and other muscular/skeletal injuries are also an office risk. Poor lifting habits are a typical problem. So is over-extending your arms and back attempting to grab or pull something just out of reach. Remember to use good lifting technique. Avoid bending at the waist when accessing low files. Stoop down or get on your knees. Avoid twisting when reaching for files or other materials in your workstation. Move your entire body to prevent back strain.



OFFICE EQUIPMENT & ELECTRICAL HAZARDS

Office equipment is capable of causing cuts, burns, and electrical shock if not used, maintained and serviced correctly. Follow manufacturers' guidelines for use and routine servicing. This may include turning the power off or unplugging equipment to clear jams. Be alert to "Household Use Only" precautions on appliances. These do not belong in an office unless their use is comparable to home use. A good example is your coffee pot—it should be industrial grade not your household Mr. Coffee appliance due to the heavy use it will receive. Store the owner's manual for appliances and equipment in a special file or binder and let co-workers know where it is kept. Only use appliances which bear a listing agency label. (i.e., UL or FM). Inspect your equipment's cords and plugs periodically. Look for damaged cord jackets, loose or broken plug

blades, evidence of overheating, and separation of the plug from the cord.