



# Weekly Safety Tip

“Your Connection for Workplace Safety”

Phone: 920-208-7520

*We're about service, commitment, results, and accountability!*

*Our Weekly Safety Tip provides valuable and current safety information relevant for Work, Home & Play.*

*And, you will be kept current on the latest Safety Compliance issues.*



**SCI SAFETY NEWS OR TIP**



**SCI OSHA NEWS OR COMPLIANCE**



**SCI HEALTHYLIVING and WELLNESS NEWS**

**We want to hear from you! Send us your feedback and give us ideas for future safety topics.**

**Let us know how you feel about our new look!**

**Safety Slogan**

**Safety in – we win  
James Lehrke-SCI**

**of the week**

## SCI Safety Tip: They May Not Wear Hard Hats, But Office Workers Also Face Risks

Sources: <http://www.blr.com>

Date: September 12, 2012

*Because office areas are not the most hazardous parts of most industrial workplaces, they may not be a safety priority for you and safety probably isn't an issue much on the minds of office workers, either. As a result, minor hazards go undetected, and those small problems can become costly injuries.*

What are the major hazards for office workers?

The North Carolina Department of Labor's *Guide to Office Safety and Health* confirms that falling is the most common office accident. Falls account for the highest number of disabling injuries and the highest percentage of lost workdays due to such injuries.

People fall while getting into and up from chairs, leaning back and tilting chairs, standing on chairs, and putting their feet up on the desk.

Other office safety hazards include:

- Poor housekeeping
- Wet surfaces
- Improperly placed cords
- Obstructed walkways
- Open file drawers
- Stairs
- Ergonomic risks (e.g., head and neck strains from improper desk/computer setup, stiffness from too much sitting, discomfort from cradling the phone between head and shoulder)
- Overexertion from lifting
- Poor lighting
- Struck by injuries (from doors, desks, carts, etc.)
- Shocks from faulty electrical equipment

- Poor air quality and bad ventilation
- Sedentary lifestyle, which can lead to health problems

Unum, a large disability insurer, is an employer that takes office safety seriously. The workforce includes underwriters, customer service specialists, nurses and doctors, and a large number of administrative and support personnel.

"Our biggest risk is repetitive motion injuries," says Chuck Spencer, corporate safety manager, charged with protecting the 10,000 employees who work at Unum's Portland, Maine headquarters.

Within a month of starting work at Unum, every new employee sits down with an ergonomic specialist for a complete ergonomic assessment.

"We build the workstation around them with a proper seat and work surface that includes any assistive technology they might need, including various types of keyboards and 'mice'." A physician or physical therapist might get involved if medical accommodations are required.

#### **Sit-Stand Desks**

Providing the right equipment isn't enough, however. The real value comes when employees alter their habits and behaviors.

Unum is making that easier by providing employees with sit-stand desks. These adjustable workstations encourage workers to move around as they work rather than remain in a static seated posture.

"There's an electronic work surface on a base, and the whole surface raises or lowers very easily," says Spencer. A digital display is preset to the height of the individual worker. With the push of a button, the setup goes from sitting to standing mode.

Workers who choose to stand are provided with a two-step stool. Placing a foot on the stool can relieve the potential discomfort of standing for long periods. Sitting versus standing is a personal choice, but Spencer says that the more time office workers spend on their feet, the more stamina they will develop.

#### **Strong Employee Involvement**

The Unum safety program is enhanced by strong employee involvement. Office workers are encouraged to speak up about unsafe conditions and report them via a help line. Employees also eagerly serve on safety teams, with duties including conducting a quarterly safety audit of their work area.

## **SCI OSHA News: OSHA Extends Enforcement Actions for Home Construction**

**Source:** <http://www.blr.com>

**Date:** September 14, 2012

Temporary OSHA enforcement measures now in place for residential construction have been continued through December 15, a 3-month extension.

New fall protection rules took effect in June 2011. They require residential builders to ensure that employees working 6 feet or more above the lower level of a site use guardrails, safety nets, or a personal fall-arrest system. Deaths from falls are the leading cause of workplace death in construction.

Enforcement actions include priority free on-site compliance assistance, penalty reduction, extended abatement dates, measures to ensure consistency, and increased outreach.

OSHA has been working to assist employers in complying with the new directive. Since October 1, 2011, on-site consultation has conducted more than 2,500 on-site visits, led 925 training sessions, and delivered 438 presentations related to fall protection in residential construction.

Also, OSHA's regional and area offices have conducted more than 800 outreach initiatives on the directive. A variety of compliance-related materials are available on the [OSHA website](#). Search "residential construction" and "fall prevention campaign."

## HEALTHY BITES

Quick Tips for Healthy Living

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### MENTAL AND EMOTIONAL HEALTH

#### GENERAL

- Headaches, back pain and insomnia can all be signs of anxiety or stress. Regular meditation, yoga or exercise can help you feel better.
  - Are you taking care of your emotional health? When we neglect our feelings, we often feel it in our body, in the form of an upset stomach, body aches, exhaustion or heart palpitations. When we're embarrassed, we might blush; when we're angry, we grow tense or feel our heart pound. These are examples of the mind-body connection. Holding on to negative emotions can take a toll on our health. Depression, long-term stress and anxiety can all wear us down and compromise our immune system, making us susceptible to colds and other infections. If we're tense, we clench our muscles, often without even realizing it. This can lead to back, shoulder or neck pain. That's why it's important to cope with our emotions in healthy ways. Exercise, deep breathing, meditation, yoga and other mind-body workouts can help fortify our emotional well-being and reduce our body's reaction to stress. Choose an activity you enjoy, and make time for it every day.
- Working through a spatial problem? Talk it out with your hands. Gesturing helps us visualize and keep track of objects.
  - Trying to picture how to rearrange the living room or how to fit your furniture into a moving van? Talk it through with your hands. Research suggests that hand gestures can help improve spatial visualization skills. Talking with our hands helps generate mental images, which allows us to keep track of abstract objects. Researchers believe this could help students better understand concepts in physics, engineering and art classes. It can even make you a more effective storyteller, by enabling you to reconstruct a scene for your listeners. The next time you're having a tough time laying out an idea, make it more concrete by talking it through with your hands

#### Mental Health and Your Job

- Heading to a brainstorming session at work? Goof off a little first. Research suggests that being in a good mood boosts creative thinking.
  - A new study published in the journal Psychological Science has found that being in a good mood boosts creative thinking. And, say the study's authors, doing things at work that put us in a happier frame of mind shouldn't necessarily be viewed as a waste of time. Watching funny videos, for instance, helped people perform better on a series of tests that required creative problem solving. Of course, that doesn't mean your boss will agree with you on this one. Lift your mood before work or during your lunch hour by listening to humorous podcasts or hanging out with the office clown. Besides boosting creativity, laughter is also a great way to relieve stress.



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*In Loving  
Memory of Jessica Lefrke*