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1. Purpose

University of Alaska Anchorage (UAA) employees, student workers, faculty, staff, and outside contractors who in office environments at UAA will potentially be exposed to hazards which could result in serious injury. The hazards associated with office work can be substantially reduced by using the equipment properly and taking precautions. This program for General Office Safety is intended to ensure workers are knowledgeable in the hazards possibly encountered working in and around the office and the steps to be taken to protect themselves and others.

2. Objective

UAA, in its continuing effort to provide personnel with safe, healthful working conditions, and to comply with the Occupational Safety and Health Act is implementing the following program for general office safety is intended to protect people working at the University, by helping employees, student workers, faculty, staff, and outside contractors better understand general safety issues.

3. Scope

This program applies to UAA employees, student employees, faculty, staff, and outside contractors working on UAA equipment who work in office environments.

4. Definitions

Daisy Chain - Connecting multiple power strips or surge protectors together in a linear series.

Ergonomics - The science of relating people, their work, and their physical work environment in such a way as to optimize their work procedures, practices and efficiency while maintaining their health and well-being

Power Strip - A block of electrical sockets that attaches to the end of a flexible cable (typically with a mains plug on the other end), allowing multiple electrical devices to be powered from a single electrical socket.

Underwriters Laboratories (UL) - One of several companies approved to perform safety testing by the U.S. federal agency Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA). UL appliances will be clearly marked with the UL symbol .

Workstation - Any work area where personnel work or may work during normal workday activities. (desk, chair, computer components, etc.).

5. Authority and Responsibilities

In addition to the roles and responsibilities outlined in the UAA Training Program, the following apply to the General Office Safety Program.

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- Work with departments to determine hazards associated with practices unique to each department's work activities
- Create, track, and/or conduct inspections on general office safety where applicable with this standard

Supervisor

- Ensure defective, damaged, office equipment and furniture are removed from service
- Conduct periodic inspections of offices in their department to ensure integrity
- Assist in the determination of safe methods for the types of work in the department
- Ensure employees are properly trained in this general office safety program

Department Safety Coordinator

- Assist in the determination of defective, damaged, or prohibited office equipment
- Conduct periodic inspections of offices in their department to ensure compliance
- Assist in the determination of safe methods for the work to be performed in the department

Employees/Student Workers

- Visually inspect equipment and furniture prior to every use for defects and damage
- Alerts department supervisor when hazards are identified
- Assesses work to determine if hazards are present and seeks alternative methods to mitigate identified hazards

Outside Contractors

- Perform all work in compliance with their company's general office safety program, which will be reviewed and approved by the EHS/RM department
- If the company does not have a program, they must comply with this program

6. Hazards Associated with General Office Safety

The following hazards encountered when working in office environments can lead to personal injury or death:

- Slips, trips and falls on slippery or uneven work surfaces
- Office collisions when turning corners or entering doorways
- Improper lifting and handling techniques

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- Ergonomic hazards
- Electrical hazards
- Muscle strains
- Horseplay that is the rough or rowdy, play, or pranks that occur at the workplace

7. Engineering Controls

Engineering controls are design plans or changes to the working environment to prevent or reduce employee exposure to potential office hazards. The following examples of engineering controls should be considered in area design to reduce office hazards.

- Properly designed work place layout to improve workflow efficiency and ergonomics
- Properly designed stairways with handrails
- Installation of stairways and work platforms in areas where tasks require frequent use of ladders to reach a location
- Ensure accessibility of the proper tools and equipment to safely perform required tasks

8. Administrative Controls

Administrative controls are safe work practices and procedures designed to reduce the risks associated with office work activities. Examples of administrative controls include the following:

- Train personnel on office work hazards and general awareness on select programs
- Routine inspections of the workplace to identify and mitigate hazards
- Immediate removal of any equipment or furniture found to be damaged or defective
- Provide personnel with the proper tools and equipment for their job tasks

9. Procedures

To ensure a safe work environment, UAA personnel must employ common sense, know physical limitations, display an attentive attitude towards their surroundings, and become aware of applicable workplace hazards and controls. The following are common safety related hazards and procedures to help maintain a safe office work environment:

General Office Safety

The following pertain to most office environments and should be followed to mitigate office hazards:

- When using lounges and eating areas, follow good housekeeping and safe operating

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procedures to prevent exposure to microwaves and burns from hot plates and coffee makers

- Do not lift beyond your capability. Get help with heavy or awkward load
- Be aware of slip and trip hazards and correct as necessary, e.g., waxed or wet floors and other items obstructing or causing a trip hazard such as wires, rugs, litter, or equipment
- While sitting in chairs, always keep all feet or casters on the ground, and be careful when leaning back in a tilting chair to prevent tipping
- Be cautious when walking in snow and ice, use ice cleats as needed
- All chemicals including cleaning supplies must be in the original container with the manufacturers label, or if in a secondary container there must be a label identifying the contents and hazard, refer to the UAA Hazcom Program
- When visiting other departments or areas, be sure to check for any additional safety rules or required personal protective equipment
- Always maintain a clean and orderly workplace

Office Traffic Flow

Incidents often occur as a result of personnel being struck by doors or other people. The following apply while traveling through the office:

- Running in the office is prohibited
- Slow down when walking around corners or into a room to prevent collision
- Be aware of the direction of a door swing to avoid being hit by an opening door
- Open doors slowly to prevent hitting personnel on the other side, use the window if equipped
- When traversing stairways stay to the right and always use the handrail
- Do not walk while carrying loads that block your vision
- Immediately report tripping hazards such as defective tiles, boards or carpet

Filing Cabinets/Drawers

Filing cabinets can be a major cause of accidents and should be used with care. When using filing cabinets, follow these safety tips:

- Close all file drawers immediately after use
- Use handles to open and close drawers to avoid finger injuries. Do not kick drawers closed
- Open only one file drawer at a time to avoid toppling the cabinet

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- Never leave an open drawer unattended
- Never open a drawer if someone is underneath it
- Never climb on office equipment
- Never climb on open file drawers

Electrical Equipment

The large amount of electrical equipment in a typical office can expose workers to serious electrical hazards, including shocks, burns and fire

- Electrical appliances need to be maintained and regularly inspected for defects
- Electrical cords on appliances need to be inspected regularly, appliances must be taken out of service if any damage is found to the cord insulation
- Only U.L.-listed appliances are acceptable to use in the office UL appliances will be clearly marked with the UL symbol .
- Appliances should be equipped with power switches to eliminate frequent plugging and unplugging
- Appliances should never be unplugged by pulling on the cord
- Portable space heaters are allowed if they meet these conditions:
 - Equipped with automatic tip-over shut-off protection.
 - Power cord is never run under rugs, carpeting or furniture
 - Power cord plugged directly into a wall outlet, not into a surge protector, multi-outlet box or extension cord
 - Never operated unattended
 - Circuit breaker does not trip

Extension Cords and Power Strips

Extension cords and power strips are useful tools, but care needs to be taken to use them properly. UAA personnel must follow these guidelines for extension cords, telephone cords, and power strips.

- Extension cords are designed for temporary use only, meaning they cannot replace permanent wiring for equipment
- A heavy reliance on extension cords is an indication that you have too few outlets to address your needs. Have additional outlets installed where you need them

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- Buy only cords approved by an independent testing laboratory, such as Underwriters Laboratories (UL), ETL-SEMKO (ETL) or Canadian Standards Association (CSA)
- Care should be taken not to run cords across walkways
- If a cord must be run across an aisleway for a short period a cord protector should be placed over the cord, or at a minimum the cord should be taped down
- Cords should never be run through walls or into another room through ceiling tiles
- The appliance or tool that you are using the cord with will have a wattage rating on it. Match this up with your extension cord, and do not use a cord that has a lower rating
- Use extension cords with polarized and/or three-prong plug
- Do not use an extension cord for more than one appliance
- Do not use indoor extension cords outdoors
- Replace cords with cracks, cuts and damaged insulation, repair is not cost effective and can only be done by a qualified electrician
- Never daisy chain power strips or surge protectors
- Do not use power strips in moist or potentially moist areas, such as kitchens, utility rooms and some basements.
- Do not continue to use a power strip if it feels hot.
- Never cover a power strip with a rug or clutter
- Do not staple, tack or nail a power strip to anything

Lighting

Vision problems are one of the leading sources of complaints among office workers. Poor office lighting can cause eye strain and irritation, fatigue, double vision, watering, reddening of the eyelids, and a decrease in the power of focus and visual acuity. Headaches as well as neck and back pains may occur as a result of workers straining to see small or detailed items. Poor lighting in the workplace is also associated with an increase in accidents. Direct and reflected glare and shadows as well as delayed eye adaptation when moving from bright surroundings into dark ones (or vice versa) may prevent an employee from seeing tripping and other similar hazards. There are a number of measures that can be used to prevent and control poor lighting conditions in the work environment:

- Ensure office lighting is adequate and available
- Report burnt out bulbs and light fixtures that are not working properly for repair or replacement

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- Whenever possible, office workers should not face windows, unshielded lamps, or other sources of glare
- Adjustable shades should be used if workers face a window
- Diffused light will help reduce shadows
- Indirect lighting and task lighting are recommended
- Task lamps are very effective in supplementing general office lighting for those who require or prefer additional lighting

Workstation Ergonomics

Ergonomics means fitting the workplace to the workers by modifying or redesigning the job, workstation, tool or environment. Properly designing and setting up the workplace can considerably mitigate ergonomic hazards. There are a multitude of discomforts that can result from ergonomically incorrect computer workstation setups. The most common complaints relate to the neck, shoulders, and back. Others concern the arms and hands and occasionally the eyes. For more information on ergonomics reference the UAA Ergonomics and Back Safety Program.

Ladder and Stepstool Safety

Procedures for ladder safety can be found in the UAA Ladder Safety Program. Some common general office safety practices personnel should follow at all times include the following:

- Never use a chair or desk to reach a high spot, contact your supervisor or Facilities Maintenance and Operations for equipment or assistance
- Only use step stools and ladders designed for that purpose
- Always inspect your ladder or stool prior to use to make sure it there is no damage or missing parts
- Report any broken ladder or step stool and make sure it is taken out of use
- If working with a heavy load check the rating on the ladder or stool to ensure you are not putting too much stress on the ladder
- Ensure all feet are securely on a flat, slip free surface
- If using an A-frame ladder or folding stool, make sure the legs are fully extended and supports are locked in place
- One person on a ladder at a time, unless the ladder is specifically designed for two
- Do not lean out from the side of the ladder, keep your weight centered
- Never stand on the top rung or step of a ladder. Get a taller ladder if needed

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Material Storage

Improper material storage can lead to items falling and injuring UAA personnel. Reference the UAA Housekeeping and Material Storage Safety Program for more information, but the following should be considered for safe storage in the office:

- Keep materials at least 18 inches or more away from automatic sprinklers, fire extinguishers and sprinkler controls
- Materials must be kept at least 3 feet from unit heaters, radiant space heater, duct furnaces, and flues
- Make sure stored material does not obstruct any of the following:
 - Safety Showers
 - Fire Extinguishers
 - Exits
 - Electrical panels
 - Fire alarm pull station
 - Fire Doors
- Avoid storing material directly on the ground, place on a shelf or pallet to discourage pests and allow for easy movement
- Avoid storing materials on top of lockers or file cabinets to prevent them from sliding off
- Stack boxes and objects straight up and down to maintain stability and prevent from falling
- Use shelving and racking whenever possible to provide a more stable storage platform for materials
- Ensure materials are placed solidly and completely on a shelf, rack, equipment or counters to prevent from tipping or being knocked off
- Shelving should be anchored to the ground or wall to increase stability
- Avoid stacking materials in areas where people may bump them such as aiseways or hallways
- Avoid storing materials on top of lockers or file cabinets to prevent them from sliding off
- Store as much equipment and files inside lockers, cabinets and file drawers to minimize clutter
- Ensure materials are placed solidly and completely on a shelf, rack, equipment or counters to prevent from tipping or being knocked off

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- Avoid stacking materials in areas where people may bump them such as aiseways or hallways
- Shelving should be anchored to the ground or wall to increase stability

Fire Safety and Preparedness

It is critical all personnel understand the procedures in the event of a fire and can take appropriate actions. All UAA personnel must ensure they understand the following:

- Alarm including audible signal and/or strobes that indicate the employee must evacuate
- Two exit routes to leave the building in the event of a fire
- Location of the meeting place for roll call after an evacuation
- Location of fire alarm pull stations and the procedure for activating them

If employees will be required to use a fire extinguisher to attempt to put out a fire they must be trained annually in the proper use and operation of fire extinguishers including hands on demonstration.

All fires regardless of size must be reported to the department supervisor and using the UAA Online Incident Reporting tool.

Emergency Preparedness

Ensure all personnel know what to do in the event of an emergency affecting the office including procedures for the following:

- Earthquake
- Severe weather
- Active Shooter/ Armed Aggressor
- Utilities failure
- Terrorism and Civil Disturbance
- Volcanic Ash Fall
- Hazardous materials Release/ Oil Spill
- Flooding

Please refer to the UAA Emergency Preparedness webpage and UAA Emergency operations plan for more information.

10. Inspections

To ensure UAA office areas are maintained in a safe condition and ensure UAA personnel are

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maintaining work areas in a safe condition the following inspections are required:

Each day personnel will visually inspect their work area to ensure housekeeping is adequate and the building and equipment are in proper working condition. Any deficiencies should be reported to the department supervisor and if needed Facilities Maintenance and Operations department for any repairs or maintenance.

Department supervisors with the assistance of EHS/RM upon request must determine if additional inspections are required and at what frequency.

11. Training

UAA shall provide a training program for personnel working in office environments.

The program shall enable personnel to recognize office hazards and shall train personnel in the procedures to be followed to minimize these hazards.

The UAA shall ensure that all personnel have been trained by a competent person in the following areas, as applicable:

- The nature of office hazards in the work area
- The correct procedures for mitigating office hazards
- Procedures for reporting hazards

Retraining shall be provided for personnel as necessary if an accident occurs, new workplace hazards are identified, a near loss incident has occurred, or there is a change in the type of equipment used, so that the employee maintains the understanding and knowledge acquired through compliance with this section.

12. Program Evaluation

The General Office Safety Program shall be evaluated on an annual basis utilizing the protocols set forth by EHS/RM. The evaluation team will consist of a department safety coordinator and a designee from EHS/RM. EHS/RM will define the scope of the evaluation. The final report will be developed by the EHS/RM utilizing the information received during the evaluation. The deficiencies determined in the report will be documented and corrective action plans will be developed.

13. References

OSHA regulations that apply to General Office Safety are included below.

- 29CFR1910.303

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- 29 CFR 1910.1200
- 29 CFR 1910 Subpart E
- 29 CFR 1910 Subpart N

14. Revision History

Revision Number	Date Revised	Description of Change	Revised By	Approved By
1				
2				
3				