PRESENTER'S GUIDE

"<u>OFFICE SAFETY</u>"

Part of the General Safety Series

Quality Safety and Health Products, for Today... and Tomorrow

OUTLINE OF MAJOR PROGRAM POINTS

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The following outline summarizes the major points of information presented in the program. The outline can be used to review the program before conducting a classroom session, as well as in preparing to lead a class discussion about the program.

- **Millions of employees seek medical treatment every year for injuries that happen on the job.**
    - Taking inventory, storing supplies on a shelf, using a shredder, carrying a box of paper to the copier, or even just sitting at your desk.
    - They're all common workday activities and they're all ways you could get hurt.
    - But "getting hurt" doesn't have to be part of your job description.
    - You can avoid injuries by understanding the risks that exist in your office, and taking positive steps to avoid them.

- **When you work in an office you're at least twice as likely as a non-office worker to suffer a disabling injury due to a fall.**
    - You can reduce that risk by using a few common-sense safety principles.

- **First, remember to "walk, don't run."**
    - You don't need to go any faster than a walking pace, even in an emergency.

- **The next rule is, "look where you're going".**
    - Using your eyes for something else as you're walking, like reading a report or looking at your cell phone, puts you at risk.

- **What should you be looking out for? Here are a few tripping hazards you're likely to stumble over in today's office environments:**
    — Desk and filing cabinet drawers that have been left open.
    — Office supplies stacked in walkways, or other floor clutter.
    — Computer cables, power cords and telephone wires that are underfoot.
    — Torn carpet or loose flooring.

- **You can also encounter serious slipping hazards whenever rainwater or other liquids get onto smooth or polished floors, such as in foyers and entryways.**
    — It's a danger that's easy to miss.

- **Be especially careful during wet or snowy weather.**
    — Be sure to wipe your feet when you come in from outside.

- **Look for beverages or other spills in the breakroom, too.**
    — If you spill something yourself, clean it up.

- **No matter how alert you are, you won't be able to see any hazards if there's not enough light.**
    — So make a note of malfunctioning light fixtures and burnt-out bulbs. Replace or report them.
    — And talk to your supervisor about areas that are always "too dark".
    — More light in the right places will make everyone in the office safer.

- **Some accidents "happen to us", but others happen because we put ourselves at risk.**
    — Even doing something as simple as sitting in a common office chair can get us in trouble.
    — Sometimes we use chairs, and other office furniture, in ways they weren't designed for.

- **One very risky form of "chair abuse" is tilting backward, with your feet up on the desk, so you can "work" more comfortably.**
    — There's nothing "comfortable" about falling over backwards.
    — So keep all your chair's legs on the floor at all times.

- **Standing on a chair to reach something is another dangerous move.**
    — It may seem like a time-saver, but it's really just a quick way to fall down and get hurt.
    — Use a footstool or a ladder instead. They're designed to do the job safely.

- **Office chairs get a lot of use, and eventually they wear out.**
    — To make sure yours doesn't "let you down", inspect it for loose or damaged parts and cracked welds.
    — If you find a problem, tag the chair "broken," and remove it from service.

- **Misusing office tools is another good way to get hurt.**
    — Pounding on a stapler to "make it" fasten more sheets of paper than it was designed to handle is a bad idea, unless you actually want to damage the nerves in the palm of your hand.

- **It doesn't pay to overload paper cutters, either. Trying to "power" the blade through too much paper will do a lousy cutting job, and could injure you in the process.**
    — What's your hurry? Take some of the paper out and make several smaller cuts instead.
    — Keep your fingers out of the way of that blade.
    — It'll cut fingers and hands just as easily as it cuts paper.

- **Scissors, pushpins and utility knives can easily hide in clutter on your desktop or work table.**
    - You don't want to find out the hard way that they're in there!
    - Store sharp tools and materials in their own special drawers or containers, separate from other supplies.

- **We don't usually think of paper as being dangerous, but its sharp edges can and will cut you.**
    - You can prevent this painful experience by using finger guards.
    - You can even get sliced by the flap of an envelope, so moisten it with a sponge instead of licking it. It's safer and more sanitary.

- **Shoes that don't fit not only feel uncomfortable, but over time they can actually injure your feet.**
    - The same principle applies to your workstation.
    - If it doesn't "fit" you, it can lead to problems with your neck, back, hands, wrists, even your eyes.

- **The study of preventing these types of problems is called "ergonomics".**
    - When you set up your desk, chair and computer using ergonomic principles, you can do your work in a posture that relieves physical stresses, instead of making them worse.

- **The first step is to adjust the height of your chair.**
    - You should position it so when your forearms are flat on your work surface they form an angle between 90 and 120 degrees with your upper arms.

- **Next you need to focus on your lower body.**
    - The better support your chair gives to your lower back, hips and thighs, the less strain you'll feel, and the less chance of injury.
    - So your thighs should be roughly parallel to the floor, and your knees about the same height as your hips, with your feet placed slightly forward.

- **Your feet need good support, too. If they're resting flat on the floor after you adjust your chair, you're all set.**
    - But if your feet are dangling, that will stress your back, so you'll need to use a footrest for proper support.

- **Lastly, adjust your computer keyboard so you can keep your wrists "flat" as you use it.**
    - This "flat wrists" position helps to prevent a painful workplace injury called "carpal tunnel syndrome".
    - If the keyboard itself won't adjust, you can put a wrist pad, or even a rolled-up towel, in front of it to get the same result.
    - You might also need to raise your seat height a little.

- **Computers make many of our office tasks easier, yet it seems that our eyes are working harder than ever.**
    - Doctors have given this problem a name, "Computer Vision Syndrome".
    - Symptoms include dry, irritated eyes, blurred vision and headaches, even neck and shoulder pain.

- **When we're focusing on a computer screen, we blink at only about half the normal rate.**
    - It's no wonder our eyes get dry and irritated.
    - Make a habit of consciously blinking more often when you do computer work.
    - Use lubricating eye drops or artificial tears if you get really dry.

- **Another way to take the strain off your eyes, as well as the muscles in your neck and shoulders, is to position your computer's monitor correctly.**
    - Its screen should be sixteen to twenty-seven inches away from you.
    - The top of the screen should be at or just below your eye level.

- **When was the last time you cleaned your computer screen?**
  - — You're just asking for eyestrain if you let your monitor get dirty… and stay that way.
  - — The screen's electrical charge attracts dust.
  - — Unless you clean your screen regularly, the images will just get harder and harder for you to see.

- **Use disposable wipes that are made specifically for cleaning monitor screens.**
  - — Power down your monitor before cleaning.
  - — Rub gradually in small circles across the screen. Avoid putting direct pressure on the surface.
  - — Do this on a regular basis. Your eyes will appreciate it!

- **Give your eyes a rest now and then.**
  - — Take occasional breaks to focus your eyes on something at least twenty feet away.
  - — Or you can simply switch to a different task, like filing.

- **Now-a-days we can't get through a workday without help from printers, fax machines, paper shredders, calculators, copiers and other electrically-powered devices.**
  - — These tools are so commonplace that it's easy to forget that they can be dangerous.

- **Their motors drive moving parts like rollers, belts, gears and blades that can pinch, crush or cut your fingers, if you let them.**
  - — So keep clear of the working parts of any powered equipment.
  - — Don't remove protective guards or open any access panels when the machine is running.
  - — Loose clothing, long hair or jewelry can sometimes get caught in the works if you're careless!

- **Copiers can pose a threat to your eyes.**
  - The lamps in many copiers are bright enough to do real damage, so keep the document cover down when the machine is operating.
  - If you can't close the cover completely, make sure you look away from the light and close your eyes.

- **Copiers and printers use toner powder, which can irritate your skin and your eyes.**
  - Although most toner now comes in cartridges, which reduces the risk of spilling, it's still a good idea to handle them carefully.
  - If any powder does manage to leak out, clean it up right away.
  - Then wash your hands and face thoroughly.

- **The electricity that makes office equipment go can be dangerous as well.**
  - A frayed or cracked power cord can give you a severe shock, or even start a fire.
  - Make a habit of checking the cords on the equipment you use.
  - If you discover any problems, don't plug them in.
  - Take the equipment out of service and call the repairman.

- **Power strips and "multi-plugs" make it easy to connect many pieces of equipment to a single receptacle, but that's asking for big trouble.**
  - Overloading an outlet can draw enough excess power to overheat the wires inside the walls… and that can cause a fire.

- **To avoid overloading, use an extension cord to plug some of the equipment into another socket.**
  - Keep the cord out of the way, or tape it down to prevent people from tripping over it.
  - And remember, an extension cord is never a permanent solution.

- **If there aren't enough receptacles nearby, talk to your supervisor about having more installed, or consider moving some of the equipment to another area.**

- **Everybody who works in an office picks up and moves office supplies, stacks materials on shelves, or does some filing, at least once in a while.**
    — Lifting things the wrong way can hurt your back.
    — Storing them can be tricky as well.
    — And even filing has its pitfalls.

- **"Step One" in safe lifting is always "Think before you lift".**
    — Do you really want to lift and carry that object by yourself?
    — If you have doubts, ask a coworker for an assist, or use a hand truck or dolly.

- **When you <u>are</u> making a lift by yourself, remember to:**
    — Get close to the object.
    — Bend at the knees.
    — Keep your back straight.
    — Lift with your legs.

- **When it's time to put the object down, keep your back straight, bend at the knees and lower it using your legs.**

- **Storing office materials can sometimes be hazardous as well.**
    — Putting too much weight near the top of a bookcase will make it top-heavy, which could cause it to fall over.
    — Overloading the shelves could result in them collapsing.
    — In either case, you or a coworker could be struck by falling objects, and seriously injured.

- **Avoid this risk by loading the bottom shelves first, then working your way up.**
    — Don't overload any shelf, and never put heavy items on upper shelves.

- **A filing cabinet's sliding drawers shift large amounts of weight back and forth, which makes the cabinet very sensitive to the way you load, and use, it.**
    - Use caution when filing.
    - Putting too much weight in the upper drawers will make it dangerously top-heavy, and easily tipped over.
    - Opening two or more of the drawers in a filing cabinet at once can also make a filing cabinet tip forward.

- **To avoid "tip-overs", load filing cabinets from the bottom up, and never open more than one drawer at a time.**
    - Don't forget to close drawers when you're done with them.
    - People can get hurt bumping into drawers that are left open.

- **Today's office is loaded with flammable materials like paper, plastic and furniture. Even carpeting can burn.**
    - And with nearly a hundred thousand fires occurring in commercial buildings ever year, fire safety is a crucial part of staying safe in the office.

- **Fire prevention goes on all the time.**
    - Do your part by watching out for unsafe situations.
    - Don't let paper or discarded packaging material accumulate near electrical connections.
    - Take care when using flammable liquids and aerosols.
    - Fires can't start if you keep flammable materials away from sparks or flame.

- **If you're a smoker, you can help prevent fire by smoking only in designated areas.**
    - Dispose of butts and used matches properly, so they can't ignite anything.

- **In spite of our best efforts, fires do happen. That's why your company has prepared a detailed action plan to cope with these types of emergencies.**
    - This plan is available to all employees.
    - Familiarize yourself with it so you know in advance what to do if the worst occurs.

- **Prepare yourself by learning at least two evacuation routes from your work areas so you'll have an alternate if your primary route is blocked.**
    - You'll find these routes marked on the emergency exit diagrams that are posted throughout your facility.

- **If you discover a fire, pull the fire alarm immediately.**
    - Don't try to extinguish a blaze unless you have been trained and authorized to do so, and you have the proper type of extinguisher.

- **When you hear a fire alarm, proceed immediately to an exit and leave the area.**
    - You can set a good example for your coworkers by remaining calm. Walk, do not run.
    - Never use an elevator during a fire. The fire stairs are the only safe way out.

- **Once you're outside the building, report to your designated gathering point and let your Fire Warden know you're safe.**

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- **You can work more safely in your office if you pay attention to the risks, and take steps to avoid them.**

- **Use office furniture, implements and materials the way they were designed to be used.**

- **Set up your workstation to minimize the physical stress on your body.**

- **You can reduce eyestrain by keeping your computer monitor clean, and resting your eyes regularly.**

- **To avoid falls, pay attention to where you're going, and look out for common slipping and tripping hazards.**

- **Remember that powered equipment can hurt you, and use it with caution.**

- **Lift office materials safely, and avoid overloading shelves and filing cabinets.**

- **Do your part to prevent fires, and be prepared if one occurs.**

- **Once you've identified the "risks" and determined how to avoid them, you can get more done in your office… and do it safely!**