



KEEP YOUR WORKSITE SAFE

You're walking along at your workplace and your shoe hits a wet spot on the floor – wham! You and your dignity sprawl out flat.

Or, you lift heavy boxes at work, over-exert yourself, and wind up with a serious backache. Or, you develop a painful repetitive motion injury from the machinery or computer you work on.

Falling from a ladder, bending wrong, reaching and twisting too far, being exposed to a noxious chemical ... there's a lot of potential hazards in the workplace.

Everyone wants to work in a safe environment. But given government statistics – more than 1,000 injuries occur on the job every day – workplace safety isn't something to take for granted. About 1.2 million workplace injuries and illnesses each year are serious enough to justify time off work.

What Industries are Involved

If you work at an Internet or phone company – industries at the bottom of the risk chain – chances are slim that you'll get hurt at work. But some industries have more risks than others, including food service, construction, manufacturing, and service industries. Think small nurse lifting a big patient! But we're all at risk in some ways.

Kinds of Injuries

Workplace hazards can be as temporary as an open file drawer or a slippery floor or items that shouldn't be there – ladders, stools, and hazardous materials. Hazards also can be more persistent problems, like machinery that emits hazardous fumes or poor lighting, noise, and defective furniture.

Injuries are caused by accidents – slips, trips, falls, vehicle accidents, repetitive motion, fires, exposure to harmful substances, over-exertion, being struck by an object or caught between two objects, getting something in your eye, spilling a hot liquid, getting burned, or receiving an electric shock – just to name a few.

Injuries can include an injured back, hernia, sprains, strains, bruises, contusions, cuts, heat burns, chemical burns, carpal tunnel syndrome, fractures, and dislocations.

Workers who have the highest number of sprains and strains include employees who do a lot of lifting – like orderlies, truck drivers, laborers, construction workers, and workers who move and stock materials. Men are hurt more often than women, and workers between ages 20 and 44 account for 60 percent of injuries.

HUMANA
Guidance when you need it most

What You Can Do

- **Be Sure to Address Unsafe Conditions.** Your employer wants your worksite to be safe, so report any safety concerns you might have. Don't pass the buck and expect that someone else will report a hazard.
- **Be Extra Careful During Times of Change.** The number of injuries and illnesses can change when working conditions change – practices, training levels, number of hours worked, and more.
- **Watch Your Footing.** As little as a 3/8-inch rise in a hallway can cause you to fall. And misjudging your footing can cause a fall on the stairs.
- **Know Safety Procedures.** Be sure you know the right way to do your job – whether it's proper ergonomics at the computer or running a machine. Know what's in your company's safety manual about procedures. If the procedures differ from actual practice, start asking questions.
- **Wear Protective Gear, If it's Required.** If your job requires safety glasses or other protective gear, wear them!
- **Keep Work Areas Clean.** Orderliness goes a long way toward preventing accidents. Eliminate any potential hazards that aren't absolutely necessary.
- **Keep Machinery in Good Working Order.** Report any defects or wear. Check to see that there's a preventive maintenance schedule at your worksite and be sure any unsafe machine is shut down before someone gets hurt.
- **Maintain a Safety Attitude.** Be alert to hazards – even little ones like sharp objects pointing upward or thrown loosely into drawers – and fix or report any potential problems to your supervisor or the safety person. Follow up and be sure the hazard is taken care of. Report every accident, even if the injury is minor.

Sources:

- 2005 statistics from the United States Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Nonfatal Occupational Injuries and Illness Requiring Days Away from Work, 2005" <http://stats.bls.gov/iif/oshwc/osh/case/osnr0027.pdf>
- U.S. Department of Labor, Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), "Some Do's and Don'ts Of Office Safety," <http://www.labtrain.noaa.gov/osha600/refer/menu15c.pdf>