

Report Defective Furniture

Little things can add up to making your work day a safer day. Big disasters are usually an accumulation of small problems which were ignored. Minor repairs to furniture such as a loose chair leg, a bolt missing from your desk or a cracked runner for a desk drawer can become serious problems, leading to injuries. Here are some situations to watch out for:

- Wheeled chairs, whether made of wood or another material, should have five casters in good working condition to provide stability. Check the back support to make sure it is securely fastened to the chair. Take care when adjusting the seat upwards, because you might inadvertently loosen it from the central column.
- Remember to pay attention to your body mechanics as you sit down. As you lower yourself, use one hand to steady the chair and to prevent it from rolling away.
- Wooden furniture can split and crack, creating the possibility of painful splinter wounds. Chairs with cracked, loose or broken legs can send the user sprawling painfully on the floor.
- Metal filing cabinets, desk and chairs can break down, creating sharp or rough edges. Visually check the edges. Don't run your hand over the surfaces looking for sharp or rough spots. You might just find them, giving yourself a painful cut in the process.
- Desk drawers which fit poorly or are not maintained can also cause accidents. Drawers should fit correctly into tracks, and the bottom of a drawer should be secure. Desk and cabinet drawers should also move without sticking.
- Moveable office partitions should be securely anchored to prevent tipping. Injuries have occurred when a worker bumps into a partition and knocks the unsecured section onto a neighbor in the adjoining office.
- Desks with an extension on one or both sides should have a proper brace assembly installed. Frequently, this added safety measure is over-looked when the desk is installed. A collapse of the section, when heavy printers, computers or fax machines are added, can cause serious injuries.
- Shelving, overloaded with heavy supplies, books or manuals, is another source of trouble. It should be securely fastened to the wall studs or uprights, not just to the wall covering such as drywall.
- Glass-topped tables, whether part of your desk or a coffee table in the reception area, can develop cracks and chips with the wear and tear of daily use. If they are not replaced, eventually the tables may break apart, causing serious cuts.
- Some furniture such as printer tables or light tables are equipped with electrical outlets. Make sure these are kept in good condition and are free of defects which could cause electric shock or fire.

Get into the safety habit. Examine your office furniture regularly and report any defects to your supervisor or maintenance department for repairs. By paying attention to small details, you can reap big safety dividends.

