

<b>University of Pittsburgh Safety Manual</b>	EH&S Guideline Number: <b>01-004</b>	
Subject: <b>OFFICE SAFETY</b>	Effective Date: 2/19/15 Review Date: 05/14/2020	Page 1 of 4

## BUILDING AND OFFICE SAFETY

1. All University buildings possess features that afford occupant safety in emergencies. All occupants of University buildings should observe the following guidelines for identifying and reducing hazards:
  - 1.1. Be aware of the emergency procedures or emergency signals for your building. Each University building is equipped with an emergency signaling system.
  - 1.2. Be familiar with the location of emergency exits and fire alarm pull stations.
  - 1.3. Know the short term and long term assembly areas external of your building.
  - 1.4. Never obstruct emergency exits, fire alarm pull stations or emergency equipment with furnishings or stored items. Do not conceal or obscure an exit door by draperies or decorations. Always observe the Decoration Guidelines in the Fire Safety section of this manual.
  - 1.5. Follow EXIT signs to evacuate any building. Do not place decorations, furnishings, or equipment on or near an EXIT sign that may block or diminish their visibility.
  - 1.6. No lock or fastening device of any type (e.g., padlocks, chains, etc.) that prevents egress from any building is to be installed on exit doors.
  - 1.7. Never block open a fire door unless the hold-open device is interconnected to the building fire alarm system.
  - 1.8. All electrically or magnetically locked doors in an egress will release immediately upon the activation of the building fire alarm system.
  
2. Office environments have particular hazards with potential to cause workplace injuries. The leading causes of office accidents are slips and falls, strains, over-exertion, falling objects, electrical shock, and repetitive trauma injuries. Follow these guidelines for safety in the office environment.
  - 2.1 Do not use any machine that smokes, sparks, or appears defective in any way. Immediately remove damaged or defective office machines from service.
  - 2.2 Close hand-operated paper cutters after each use and replace the blade guard.

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- 2.3 If you open a copy machine or printer for troubleshooting, remember that some parts may be hot. Always follow the manufacturer's instructions for troubleshooting.
  - 2.4 Unplug paper shredders before troubleshooting. Exercise caution with loose belts, jewelry, long hair, scarves, and neck ties near shredders.
  - 2.5 Do not open more than one file cabinet drawer at a time. Secure top-heavy file cabinets by having them bolted to the floor or wall. Keep the bottom drawer full to stabilize the entire cabinet. Do not leave file cabinet drawers open while unattended.
  - 2.6 Do not block ventilation grates with office equipment or furniture.
  - 2.7 Avoid using extension cords.
  - 2.8 Keep all cords and wires out of foot traffic areas and do not roll chairs over electrical cords or wires.
  - 2.9 Never climb using shelves or chairs. Use a step stool or ladder.
  - 2.10 Report slippery, damaged, or uneven floor surfaces, torn carpet, broken tile or poor lighting to your supervisor.
- 3 Elevators and Escalators: The following guidelines are for the safe use of elevators and escalators at the University of Pittsburgh:
- 3.1 Never tamper with elevator and escalator controls or interlocks.
  - 3.2 Never block elevator doors open.
  - 3.3 In the event of a fire or emergency, never use an elevator unless instructed by emergency responders.
  - 3.3 An emergency phone is installed in each elevator to contact the University Police. In case of emergency, press the call button, and clearly state your name and location. University Police will summon emergency help. Remain calm. Never exit the car through the emergency hatch or through the doors when between floors. Wait for help to arrive.

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#### 4 Report unsafe conditions.

All employees are encouraged to report dangerous or unsafe conditions to their supervisor. University employees may also contact the Department of Environmental Health and Safety directly to report an unsafe condition.

#### 5 The Work Environment

Supervisors and faculty are responsible for providing a safe work environment for the employees, visitors, and students in their respective areas. It is the responsibility of each supervisor, faculty member or manager to:

- 5.1 Monitor the general condition of facilities and equipment within their areas of responsibility to identify potential hazards or unsafe conditions.
- 5.2 Communicate hazards which have been identified to faculty, staff, students and the administration as appropriate.
- 5.3 Investigate reports of unsafe conditions or seek assistance from EH&S regarding such reports.
- 5.4 Plan and implement corrective actions for identified hazardous or unsafe conditions.
- 5.5 Avoid reprimanding employees or students for exercising their right to report unsafe conditions or request safety information.

#### 6 Individuals with Disabilities

Individuals with physical or mental impairments that substantially limit their daily activities are protected by the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA). The University of Pittsburgh is proactive in providing facilities and programs with unrestricted access for disabled individuals. These principles are applied during the design, construction, and alteration of buildings and properties at the University of Pittsburgh. Consult the Office of Disability Resources and Services at (412) 648-7890 with questions or concerns regarding access or accommodations for all individuals.

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## 7 Hoarding

Hoarding, a condition characterized by having an excessive amount of stored material, can be a hazard not only to occupants of a workspace or office, but to occupants of adjoining spaces and to emergency responders.

Hoarding in the workplace can create an:

- Increased risk of fire due to the accumulation of combustible material such as paper, cardboard, or clothing.
- Increased risk of a severe or catastrophic fire due to an abnormal amount of fuel or combustible material that can overwhelm existing automatic sprinkler systems or prevent the sprinkler system from effectively controlling a fire.
- Increased risk of fatalities in fire or emergency situations due to blocked escape routes or obstructed access to the exit corridors, windows and doors.
- Increased risk of injury due to being struck by or trapped under falling items.

Hoarding also poses an extreme risk to medical, fire, security and other emergency response personnel due to obstructed pathways and exits, falling objects, and excessive combustible loading that can result in difficulty controlling a fire. Additionally, hoarding makes the search for occupants in distress far more difficult.

For these reasons, excessive combustible storage is a citable offense by the City of Pittsburgh Bureau of Fire.

If you have questions on any storage practices at the University, please contact the Department of Environmental Health and Safety.