



THE UNIVERSITY
OF BIRMINGHAM

Health and Safety Guidance

Guidance for Risk Assessment in Offices

GUIDANCE/7/RAO/05

This Guidance is issued to assist those who are carrying out risk assessments in offices. It identifies a wide range of hazards that can be present in an office and model controls that may be appropriate to control these hazards. However, this document does not identify all possible hazards. Assessors should ensure that they have identified **all** the hazards that are associated with their particular activities.

The Guidance should be used in conjunction with the University Guidance on Risk Assessment GUIDANCE/17/RA/00.

Further information and advice may be obtained from the Health and Safety Unit.

The Legislation, Policies and Guidance referenced were up to date when this Guidance was issued. Details of revisions can be obtained from the University Health and Safety Unit or by accessing <http://www.hsu.bham.ac.uk/univ/univdocs.htm>

Revised and updated, March 2005
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Hazard	Possible harm	Model Controls
Manual handling (e.g. boxes of paper, mail sacks, equipment etc.)	Strains from lifting Cuts from sharp edges Bruises from dropping etc.	Carry out manual handling assessments to try to eliminate or reduce manual handling. Staff to attend manual handling training courses. Key ref: Manual Handling Operations UHSP/6/MHO/95
Slipping and tripping	Injuries due to falling etc.	Good housekeeping, keep work area tidy, keep cables etc out of the way, avoid cleaning floors at busy times, avoid carrying food and drink on corridors and stairs, have arrangements for clearing up spills, have signs to indicate wet floors, wear sensible footwear.
Unsuitable storage arrangements	Strains from bending Injury from falling materials and falling off steps etc.	Avoid high/low storage, keep heaviest items at the most convenient height, maintain good access, do not overload or make shelves/ cupboards unstable, keep tidy, if stools/ladders required ensure they are maintained and users trained how to use them safely. Key ref: - The Use and Control of Portable Ladders (UHSP/2/UCPL/94)
Use of electricity	Shock, burn, fire	Ensure equipment is maintained in good condition, used in suitable locations, sockets are not overloaded, repairs are only carried out by competent persons, users are trained to look for defects. Key ref: - Electrical Safety (UHSP/18/ES/02)
Poor condition of furniture and fittings	Injury from sharp edges, splinters, unstable furniture	Regularly check furniture, fittings are in good condition and replace damaged items
Unsuitable work stations and work patterns	Strains from poor posture, repetitive work Eye strain from close work, VDU screens, poor and unsuitable lighting Stress due to nature of work, noise, heat etc.	Carry out work station assessment, vary work patterns, consider arrangement of work place including siting of copiers etc, ensure adequate ventilation, adequate space etc. Key refs: - Workstation Design (GUIDANCE/5/WD/98) - Display Screen Equipment Use (UHSP/7/DSE/96) - DSE Checklist
Potentially dangerous equipment (e.g. guillotines etc.)	Cuts, amputation etc.	Ensure equipment correctly guarded, maintained in good condition, staff trained in use.
Harmful substances	Inhalation of vapour or dust, contamination of skin	Follow instructions on containers, carry out Chemical Hazard and Risk Assessment if labelled ' <i>hazardous</i> '. Ensure staff are aware of hazards. Key ref: -Chemical Hazard and Risk Assessment: (GUIDANCE/22/CHRA/03) - Assessment, <i>Pro forma</i> and guidance: Hazardous Substances Policy, Schdeule 2 - (UHSP/15/HS/00 S2)
Personal Security	Various	Ensure suitable arrangements in place particularly for out of hours work and work in remote areas. Key ref: - Out of Hours Activities and Unattended Equipment and Apparatus (UHSP/8/SSOHA/96)
Fire	Burn, asphyxiation	Prohibit smoking, avoid having electrical equipment in corridors (e.g. photocopiers, refrigerators etc).
General injury	Various	First Aid arrangements in place and staff aware of arrangements.
Emergencies, e.g. fire, bomb threat, major injury etc.	Various	Emergency procedures in place and staff aware of them. Specific training carried out including induction and fire training. Keep escape routes clear. Key ref: - Fire Safety (UHSP/4/FS/01)