



# 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 are sprawled out flat. Or, you lift heavy boxes at work, overexert yourself, and wind up with a serious backache. Or, you develop a painful repetitive motion injury from the machinery or computer you're working 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 take 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, and things that shouldn't be there – like ladders, stools, and hazard materials. Hazards can also be a more persistent problem like machinery that emit hazardous fumes or poor lighting, noise, defective furniture and machinery. Injuries are caused by accidents – slips, trips, falls, vehicle accidents, repetitive motion, fires, exposure to harmful substances, overexertion, 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 hurt back, hernia, sprains, strains, bruises, contusions, cuts, fractures, 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 the injuries.

## What you can do

- **Be sure unsafe conditions are addressed.** 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. Rules about keeping records on injuries and accidents are issued by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), U.S. Department of Labor. An accurate OSHA incident log is important for identifying and preventing hazards.
- **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" rise in a hallway can cause you to fall forward. And misjudging your footing can cause a fall on the stairs.

**HUMANA**  
Guidance when you need it most

- **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 are different than actual practice, start asking questions.
- **Wear protective gear,** if it’s required. If your job requires safety glasses or other protective gear, wear it!
- **Keep work areas clean.** Orderliness goes a long way toward preventing potential accidents. Eliminate any potential hazards that are not 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, “Non-fatal occupational injuries and illness requiring days away from work, 2005”  
<http://stats.bls.gov/iif/oshwc/osh/case/osnr0027.pdf>

US Department of Labor, Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), “Some do’s and don’ts of office safety,”  
<http://www.labtrain.noaa.gov/osha600/menus/menu15.htm>