



## THE CORPORATION OF THE UNITED TOWNSHIPS OF HEAD, CLARA & MARIA

### HEALTH AND SAFETY PROCEDURES - OFFICE STAFF

#### INTRODUCTION

1. Although it is true that working in an office is safer than working in industrial workplaces, there are many potential hazards in office environments that can cause injuries to employees and visitors. These include electrical shock, trips and falls, cuts, bruises, concussions, sprains and fractures.
2. Avoiding injury means getting the proper training, familiarizing yourself with the hazards, learning about the ways in which you can protect yourself and putting it all in practice. Applying the following principles and following these procedures will ensure your safety and provide a safe and healthy workplace. It is your responsibility to know these procedures and to follow them.
3. For a complete list of worker responsibilities, refer to the Municipal Health and Safety Policy – P&P1001.

#### OCCUPATIONAL HAZARDS

1. Walkways – obstacles in walkways and stairways present a safety hazard.
2. Electrical hazards – power cords, outlets, bars, extension cords and power supply may all wear and cause hazards. They may also be tripping hazards due to unsafe placement and use. Make sure that cords and bars are used correctly.
3. Office Equipment – ergonomic chairs and work stations are important to prevent repetitive strain injuries. Shelving and filing cabinets should be loaded properly to avoid tipping and falling objects. Paper and books are heavy.
4. Working Environment – ventilation, temperature control, lighting, storage, and housekeeping are all important to provide a safe and healthy work environment.
5. Fluorescent Tubes – fluorescent lights are fragile and potentially explosive. When broken suddenly, they explode, sending fragments of glass powder in all directions. Other objects with similar explosive qualities are pressurized containers or canisters.
6. Toxic and Hazardous Materials – cleansers, soiled cloths used for cleaning. Mixtures of these substances may form a chemical reaction that could be very dangerous.
7. Bending/lifting – On the job you lift a variety of objects of differing shapes and sizes. Some can put undue strain on your back if you're not prepared. The majority of back injuries are caused by improper lifting techniques or by attempting to lift something that is too heavy. Make sure you lift with your legs, not your back. If it is too heavy, ask for assistance or use a hand truck.
8. Irate Customers – people who do not like the answer they are given may sometimes become irate, bossy, abusive and threatening. Know how to manage difficult situations and diffuse a threatening individual. Know that if common strategies do not work, remove yourself from the situation or call for help. Know that if you are working alone there is an alarm button available for your use. Your health and welfare is what is important, not any material or information.

9. Driving Municipal Vehicles – office staff may have occasion to drive municipal vehicles. Normal driving hazards exist and should be prepared for.

## PROCEDURES

1. Walkways must be clear of obstacles and of a sufficient width for safe passage.
  - a. Ensure that aisles are clearly established, especially in storage areas, and no less than 22 inches wide.
  - b. Ensure that aisles are clear and no tripping hazards are present such as boxes or briefcases;
  - c. Keep all desk drawers, filing cabinets and wall cabinet doors closed to prevent someone from walking into them;
  - d. Ensure carpets and rugs are secured to prevent slipping. Floors are to be even and without cracks.
  - e. Mats are to be placed both inside and outside the entrances to prevent slippery floors.
2. Electrical Hazards
  - a. Ensure that computer cables, extension cords, telephone lines and printer cables are bundled and secured to desks or walls.
  - b. Wall outlet covers are to be in place to prevent accidental exposure to electrical wiring.
  - c. All extension cords are to be the 3-wire type and in good condition.
  - d. Only one extension cord is to be used per application. Extension cords are not to be plugged into one another.
  - e. Use a cord of appropriate length and load capability.
  - f. Power cords that are damaged in any way are to be replaced.
  - g. Wires or extension cords are not to be run under rugs, through doorways or placed in other traffic areas. If such cords are necessary, for short term use only, ensure that all cords are properly taped to avoid a tripping hazard.
  - h. Multiple outlet strips are to be equipped with overload protection, circuit breakers and/or surge protectors.
3. Office Equipment
  - a. Storage cabinets, bookcases and filing cabinets must be secured to the wall to prevent tipping. Brackets are to be heavy duty and properly installed into studs to secure heavy cabinets and shelves. For light or decorative units wall anchors of appropriate capacity may be used.
  - b. Do not open more than one drawer at a time in any cabinet to prevent it from tipping over.
  - c. Close file drawers when not in use.
  - d. Do not pile equipment, books or filing boxes on top of cabinets.
  - e. Use step stools as provided to reach items on higher shelves.
  - f. Workstation chairs are to be in good condition and able to be adjusted for the individual employee.
  - g. Ensure that the paper cutter is equipped with a guard and used properly.
  - h. Have all office equipment serviced regularly to properly maintain it and ensure safe use.
  - i. Switch off equipment prior to unplugging or cleaning.
4. Working Environment
  - a. Ensure that ventilation in photocopy and supply rooms is adequate.
  - b. Ensure that adequate lighting is in place in all work areas, including emergency lighting.

- c. Stairways, corridors and storage areas are well lit so that individuals can adequately see the steps and walkways.
  - d. Ensure that steps and changes of elevation are clearly marked.
  - e. Storage in stairways, corridors and hallways is prohibited.
  - f. A first aid kit is to be centrally located and clearly labelled.
  - g. Each worker is to perform safety inspections in their areas of responsibility on a regular basis and report deficiencies to their supervisor, the Clerk or the Health and Safety representative.
  - h. Fire extinguishers are to be available as per code and inspected monthly. Know where they are and how to use them. Make note of their size and type so that you know what types and sizes of fires you should attempt to use them on.
  - i. In case of a fire too large to attempt to extinguish, leave the building.
5. Driving Municipal Vehicles (or your own vehicle when on Municipal business) – when the vehicle is in motion you must wear your seat belt at all times, even when travelling short distances.
- a. Do not operate the vehicle until and unless all passengers (if any) have seat belts fastened.
  - b. When leaving the vehicle, make sure that it is properly immobilized and the vehicle engine has been turned off.
  - c. When stepping out, check for uneven road surfaces, debris scattered on the road and/or slippery surfaces.
  - d. Prior to operating any municipal vehicle, a circle check must be completed.
  - e. Before reversing the vehicle, you must first make sure it can be completed safely. If you have to back up, you are responsible for ensuring that your path is clear.
  - f. Always reverse at a walking pace, especially in areas with high traffic or pedestrians. If possible, avoid backing up.
6. Handling Traffic – Always look before entering any roadway. Cars, trucks, bicycles, or children may be hidden behind obstructions. Remember, the majority of motorists are in a hurry and may not yield the right of way to you.
7. Lifting – Before lifting any object, keep in mind that it might be heavier than it looks. Judge the weight of the object by rocking it with your hand. Tip the load slightly or lift gently. A heavy container will fall out of your hands.
- a. If the load is too heavy, get help or leave it there.
  - b. Don't attempt to lift more than you can handle alone.
  - c. Bend your knees, leaving your back straight while lifting. Stand close to the load with your feet apart for good balance. Use a good grip, gradually straighten your knees as you stand, keeping the load as close to yourself as can be safely done. When turning with a load, never twist your body – move your feet instead.
  - d. Avoid reaching over anything for something else.
  - e. Avoid carrying objects in front of your face where it can block your line of vision.
8. Maintenance – all workspaces should be constantly inspected for any wear, damage or obstacles. Report any damage, wear or obstacles.
9. Working alone – do not place yourself in harms way by engaging a confrontational individual. Simply record as many details after the fact and complete an incident report. Should the situation warrant, call the OPP or use the alarm button provided. Report all incidents to your supervisor immediately.

If you have any doubts about any situation – talk to your supervisor before proceeding... learn how to work and stay safe. Remember, it is your duty to report any hazard, accident or incident within the scope of your position. We can not take corrective measures if we are not aware of the hazard.