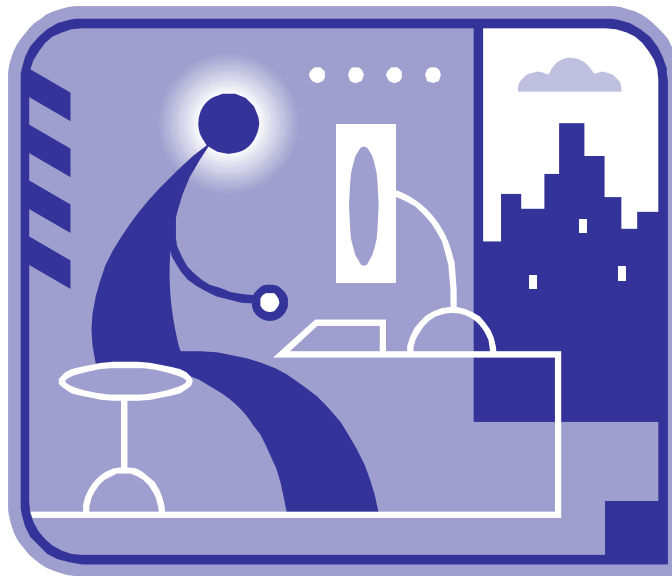


DUQUESNE UNIVERSITY

# Office Safety



**Environmental Health and Safety**

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**2011**

## Introduction

Although it is believed that the office environment is free of hazards, many do exist and cause injuries or health problems. This booklet is an effort to apply safety and health guidelines to the office work place in order to reduce those hazards and ultimately, reduce injuries. Although there is no specific regulation that covers Office Safety, there are a number of regulations that are related to it.

Office safety refers to a number of different areas, such as hazardous materials, fire safety and waste management. The purpose of this booklet is to present safety issues that are often found in office workplaces, and its applicability to staff, faculty and students.

Please review these guidelines and compare them against your daily work practices. Any suggestions for improving or adding to the information in this booklet are welcome and should be addressed to [safety@duq.edu](mailto:safety@duq.edu).

George Bender, Director EH&S

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## Walking Surfaces

**Falling is one of the greatest threats to your safety at work. Minimize this risk by staying alert when walking and following these guidelines:**

- Walk with special care over wet floors and when you have wet shoes. On rainy or snowy days, wipe your shoes as soon as you enter a building.
- Use handrails on the stairs.
- Step over carpet edges, rather than stepping on them.
- Avoid carrying objects that might obstruct your view when walking.
- Approach doorways and corners with caution to avoid collisions with others.
- Look both ways for oncoming traffic and utilize crosswalks to avoid walking between parked cars when crossing streets and alleys

## Storage

### **It is important to keep our workplace neat.**

- Order only what you need, rather than stockpiling office supplies. An over-abundance of items can make storage unsafe.
- Store flammable materials in their proper containers and in flammable storage cabinets.
- Stack boxes in straight columns, with the largest on the bottom. When stocking shelves, keep the heaviest items waist level to minimize lifting effort.
- Maintain good posture; when retrieving supplies from storage, do not twist or stretch your body.
- Keep aisles clear; place wastebaskets and boxes where they don't present tripping hazards.
- Utilize high storage areas with caution (High storage is defined as anything at eye level or above). Do not store items so large or heavy that, should they fall, could cause injuries or other damages. When storing items on top of wall-mounted cabinets, confirm the weight capacity of that cabinet (and remember that the weight of a cabinet includes what is stored inside, not just what is being placed on top).

## Electrical Safety

### **Severe damages and injuries can result from improper use of electricity.**

- Extension cords are a temporary solution. Contact Facilities Management if a permanent power supply is needed.
- Use extension cords only when properly sized for the job. Reduce the risk of tripping by taping them down.
- Do not plug power strips into power strips or extension cords. An overloaded power strip poses a shock and fire hazard.
- Never use machinery with frayed cords or wires. Contact Facilities Management to have defective equipment fixed.
- When operating any electrical appliance or machine within 10 feet of running water or in damp conditions, make sure a GFCI (ground fault circuit interrupter) is installed and/or that the plug is sufficiently grounded.
- Addition of portable appliances such as heaters and microwaves, must be cleared through Facilities Management to ensure the electrical system can support the increased current load.

## Waste Disposal

There are numerous recycling opportunities across campus:

- Recycling in some buildings includes the use of big, black totes, which can accommodate a mix of materials. Other recycling efforts include totes for bottles and paper. Familiarize yourself with what you have in your area.
- All batteries, including rechargeable batteries, should be directed to the EHS office, B-8 Mellon Hall for proper recycling.
- Computer equipment is recycled through CTS. Your computer should first be cleaned of all old files, which would need to be scheduled through the Help Desk at x4357 (HELP). Once your machine is cleaned, submit a Maximo online to Facilities Management, who will then pick-up all of the equipment.
- Ink cartridges can be sent back to the supplier.
- Note: These recycling services pertain to Duquesne University items located on campus. Duquesne University is not permitted to accept items from your home or personal businesses.

### Household Recycling and Hazardous Materials Disposal

Recycling services should be offered by your municipality for all your household glass, plastic, metals, paper, etc. For *hazardous waste disposal*, the Southwestern Pennsylvania Household Hazardous Waste Task Force conducts periodic Household Hazardous Waste Collections. This group will collect items such as chemical products, auto maintenance products, home improvement supplies (paints, oil, insecticides, etc), hobby products (glues, paints, cements, etc), pharmaceuticals (nail polish, hair color, prescription drugs, mercury thermometers, etc), or lawn care products.

Visit the Waste Task Force's website for information on household chemical cleanout collections: [www.swpahhw.org/home.html](http://www.swpahhw.org/home.html)

## Fire Safety

**The basics of fire safety are knowing what is burning and how to fight it.**

### Classifications of Fuels



**Class A - Ordinary Combustibles:** wood, paper, cloth, trash, plastics.



**Class B - Flammable liquids:** gasoline, oil, grease, solvents.



**Class C - Electrical:** energized electrical equipment.



**Class D - Combustible Metals:** potassium, sodium, aluminum, magnesium.



**Class K - Cooking Appliances/Media:** vegetable or animal oils/fats in kitchens and food storage areas.

### Types of Fire Extinguishers

Once you know what is burning, you can choose the correct fire extinguishing media for the type of fuel:

- Carbon dioxide - BC rated
- Dry Chemical - ABC rated
- Metal/Sand - D rated
- Kitchen - AK or ABCK rated
- Halotron - BC rated

EH&S distributes extinguishers according to the fire hazards or types of fuels in each area. Become familiar with the classes of fuels in your area and the locations of appropriate extinguishers.

## Fire Safety

### Using a Fire Extinguisher

It is easy to remember how to use a fire extinguisher if you can remember the acronym **PASS**, which stands for **P**ull, **A**im, **S**queeze, and **S**weep.



**Pull the pin.**

This will allow you to discharge the extinguisher.



**Aim at the base of the fire.**

If you aim at the flames, the extinguishing agent will fly right through and do no good. You want to hit the fuel at the base of the fire.



**Squeeze the handle or lever.**

This depresses a button that releases the pressurized extinguishing agent in the extinguisher.



**Sweep from side to side**

Start using the extinguisher from a safe distance away, and then move forward. Once the fire is out, keep an eye on the area in case it re-ignites.

Fire Safety training and Hands-on Fire Extinguisher training are available to interested groups. To schedule a class, contact Vanessa Fowler, the Environmental Health and Safety Coordinator at [fowlerv@duq.edu](mailto:fowlerv@duq.edu) or X1506.

## Evacuations/Emergency Procedures

### **Evacuations**

In case of a fire or other emergency that requires a building be evacuated, it is important to be aware of a few things first:

- Phone numbers to call in case of fire, spill, or accident.
- Locations of alarms and how to activate them.
- Routes to and locations of emergency exits.
- Locations of fire extinguishers and how to use them.
- Location of gathering point.

### **During an evacuation:**

- Remain calm.
- Turn off equipment and appliances.
- Close, but do not lock, doors and windows.
- Proceed to the nearest exit. Use stairs only, DO NOT use elevators.
- Report to gathering point.
- Do not re-enter the building until you have been instructed to do so by the person(s) in command.

Some situations will require you to “shelter in place.”

In some emergency circumstances, it may be safer to stay in your present location and not to exit a building –this is called ‘sheltering in place’.

Situations that might require sheltering in place to be implemented include: Severe storms (i.e. tornadoes or other life threatening weather conditions), a public disturbance (i.e. violent demonstration, intentional/ accidental explosions or intentional/accidental chemical/contaminant release.

In such situations, Floor Marshalls, Public Safety or local response authorities will provide shelter in place instructions. Depending on the circumstances, shelter in place can include additional precautions such as staying away from windows, turning off air conditioners, fans or heating systems etc...

## Floor Marshals

Floor Marshals have been assigned to every floor of each building on campus. Their role is to help EH&S assure safe working environments throughout the year and to assist during evacuations and emergency procedures.

### **Before an emergency, Floor Marshals are to:**

- Become knowledgeable of the floor's occupants and building layout for utilization during evacuation procedures.
- Know the gathering point for the floor and familiarize other employees with it.
- Assign persons to assist those who may require special assistance to evacuate the floor.

### **During an emergency, Floor Marshals:**

- Immediately respond and provide leadership by directing building occupants toward the exit.
- Communicate the need to evacuate to the designated gathering point.
- Walk through the entire floor, including all rooms, to ensure all occupants have evacuated.
- Report to the Police or Incident Commander when leaving the building.

#### DU Emergency Alert System

The DU emergency Alert refers to an automated notification system that is used to contact students and employees in the event of an emergency. Individuals must subscribe to the system in order to receive alerts. You can choose to receive alerts via mobile devices, text messages or a home phone number. You can subscribe online through the Duquesne University website.

## Training

The Environmental Health and Safety Department provides training on a variety of topics to nearly every population on campus. These training courses are provided in compliance with state, federal and local laws and regulations as well as in accordance with insurance carrier requirements.

Depending on your job description, duties and potential exposures, you may be required to complete one or more of the following training courses:

- Asbestos Awareness
- Bloodborne Pathogens
- Driver Safety
- Fire Safety and Fire Extinguisher Handling
- Gas Cylinder Safe Handling
- General Laboratory Safety
- Hazard Communication
- Radiation Safety
- Respiratory Protection
- Spill Prevention, Control and Countermeasures
- X-Ray Unit/Radiation Safety

Individuals identified as needing to complete a specific training course are notified of the requirement and their training options, which may consist of in-class sessions or a Blackboard training module.

## Blackboard Training

Many, but not all, training courses are available online on Blackboard. If you have been identified as needing to complete a Blackboard training module...

**To begin** open your internet browser and enter [www.blackboard.duq.edu](http://www.blackboard.duq.edu) into the address bar.

**Login** using your MultiPass user name and password. If you forgot your username/password or need any assistance with logging in, contact CTS at X4357 or click on the “Forgot your Password?” link below the login.

**Under the “My Communities” tab**, click on “Environmental Health and Safety.”

Click on the “Training Modules” button to locate your course; there you will find a PowerPoint presentation, hand-out, quiz (70% passing grade) and course evaluation. Once your training is complete, feel free to explore the other menu options on the left.

Questions regarding online training and technical issues may be directed to the EH&S Blackboard leader, Vanessa Fowler at [fowlerv@duq.edu](mailto:fowlerv@duq.edu) or X1506.

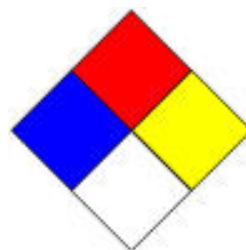
## Hazard Communication

“Hazard Communication” is simply a method of communicating the hazards associated with a particular chemical or material to chemical users or others in the area of its use. Hazard Communication at Duquesne University has 3 main parts:

- Chemical Inventory: A chemical inventory for each building is maintained and posted in each respective building.
- Hazard Labels: Labels on primary and secondary chemical containers contain the following information: name of chemical, name of manufacturer and the degree to which it is a health hazard, fire hazard, reactive or some other hazard.
- MSDSs: Material Safety Data Sheets for every chemical on the inventory are maintained and updated periodically. These MSDSs provide a lot of detailed information: specific hazards, appropriate safety precautions and proper cleanup and disposal procedures.

Any questions regarding the safety of chemicals in your area or for more information about hazard labels and MSDSs, contact Vanessa Fowler at [fowlerv@duq.edu](mailto:fowlerv@duq.edu) or X1506

NFPA Hazard Communication Diamond:  
Blue- Health  
Red- Flammability  
Yellow- Reactivity  
White- Special Hazards  
Scale of 0-4: 0 indicates no danger and 4 indi-



## Health and Wellness

Sitting at a desk with long hours at the computer can put a lot of stress on your body, causing fatigue and joint and muscle soreness. Try these tips to keep active and energized throughout the day:

- Take a walk...Sitting for long periods of time and slouching puts pressure on your knees and back. For every hour at your desk, get up and walk for 5 minutes.
- Stretch! Relieve tension in your neck and shoulders with simple stretches: (1) Rotate your shoulders in a circle and push your shoulder blades together and down. (2) Bring your ear to your shoulder and hold for 20 seconds; for an extra stretch, apply gentle downward pressure to the stretch.
- Stay hydrated and ward off fatigue and headaches with 8-10 cups of water a day.
- Protect yourself and co-workers during cold and flu season by washing your hands often, covering your mouth when you sneeze or cough and periodically cleaning/disinfecting communal resources (i.e. kitchenettes and copiers).
- Eat a healthy lunch. Skip the empty calories in the vending machine, take a break from your desk and get a healthy lunch or snack at one of the many dining options.

## Links of Interest

EH&S at Duquesne: [www.duq.edu/ehs](http://www.duq.edu/ehs)

DU Emergency Alert: <https://ra.cr.duq.edu/Production/emergency/>

Occupational Safety and Health Administration: [www.osha.gov](http://www.osha.gov)

National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health: [www.cdc.gov/niosh](http://www.cdc.gov/niosh)

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)

National Safety Council: [www.nsc.org](http://www.nsc.org)

National Fire Protection Association: [www.nfpa.org](http://www.nfpa.org)

## EH&S Policies and Programs of Interest

Fire Extinguisher Policy

Floor Marshal Responsibilities

Hazard Communication Program: Employee Right to Know

**EH&S Policies and Programs are available on the EH&S website as well as upon request. Please see EH&S staff for any questions regarding these policies and programs.**

## EH&S Staff Information

George Bender, Director Environmental Health and Safety

Extension: X5329

Email: [benderg@duq.edu](mailto:benderg@duq.edu)

Office: Facilities Management

Areas: Occupational safety and health, indoor air quality, asbestos management and design, OSHA training, life safety.

Vanessa Fowler, Environmental Health and Safety Coordinator

Extension: X1506

Email: [fowlerv@duq.edu](mailto:fowlerv@duq.edu)

Office: B6 Mellon Hall

Areas: Fire Safety, Hazard Communication, SPCC, Blackboard Training and Newsletter.

Paula Sweitzer, Hazardous Materials Manager and RSO

Extension: X4763

Email: [sweitzerp@duq.edu](mailto:sweitzerp@duq.edu)

Office: B8 Mellon Hall

Areas: Waste Disposal, Laboratory Safety, Safety Training and MSDS management.

Nicole Rodrigues, Environmental Health and Safety Technician

Extension: X6382

Email: [rodriguesn@duq.edu](mailto:rodriguesn@duq.edu)

Office: B7 Mellon Hall

Areas: Fire and Laboratory Safety Inspections.

## References

George Mason University Safety Office: General Office Safety

Oosthoek, Sharon. "Stop slouching, start stretching!: Easy exercises to do at your computer." Microsoft Home Magazine.

UC Berkeley EH&S: Fact Sheet

<http://www.ehs.berkeley.edu/pubs/factsheets/60officesafety.html>

## Notes

My Safety Information

Building: \_\_\_\_\_

Floor Marshal(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Gathering Point: \_\_\_\_\_

Evacuation Route: \_\_\_\_\_

For Police, Medical, Fire: Call COPS (X2677)

Check out the EH&S newsletter, *The Safety Chronicle*, to stay up-to-date with EH&S happenings and current issues in safety. *The Safety Chronicle* is available on the EH&S website and Blackboard training site.



Have a safety concern or suggestion for how to make an area or process safer? Share your thoughts with EH&S and the Labor Management Safety committee using the Campus Safety Suggestion Form available on our website at [www.duq.edu/ehs](http://www.duq.edu/ehs).

**DUQUESNE UNIVERSITY**  
ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

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Blackboard: My Communities