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WHS-PRO-022

Office Safety

Procedure

WHS-PRO-022 Office Safety Procedure					
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PURPOSE

The purpose of this procedure is to ensure the office occupational hazards are identified, are measured where possible, assessed and effective control measures implemented, such that statutory requirements are complied with and the organisation's standards are met.

SCOPE

Applies to the minimum standards for the office environment, keyboard equipment and occupational health and safety in the office.

REFERENCES

- AS/NZS 4801:2001 OH&S Management Systems – 4.4.6 Hazard identification, hazard/risk assessment and control of hazards
- Code of Practice – Managing the Work Environment and Facilities
- AS/NZS 3590 Screen-based workstations
- AS/NZS 1680.2.2:2008 Interior and workplace lighting

DEFINITIONS

Nil

FORMS

- [WHS-FOR-022.1 Office Safety Inspection Checklist](#)

ACTIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Maintaining the Work Environment and Facilities

- The work environment should be maintained so that it remains in a clean and safe condition. Broken or damaged furniture, fixtures and fittings, including chairs, plumbing, air-conditioning and lighting should be repaired or removed promptly.
- Facilities should be clean, safe, accessible and in good working order. Consumable items, including soap and toilet paper, should be replenished regularly. Equipment and furniture such as toasters, fridges, lockers or seating should be maintained in good working order.
- Workplaces and facilities should be cleaned regularly, usually on a daily or weekly basis. The cleaning schedule of facilities such as dining areas, toilets, hand basins and showers should take into account shift work, the type of work performed, the likelihood of contamination and the number of employees using them.

Minimum Standards

The Executive Director is responsible for ensuring the minimum standards for the office environment, keyboard equipment and workplace health and safety in the office are met as defined in this procedure and include the following standards:

- Temperature, Humidity, Ventilation
 - Office work areas recommends a temperature range of 21°- 24° Celsius for offices in summer.
 - Humidity refers to the amount of water vapour in the air. The optimum comfort range for relative humidity is 40-60 per cent. Low humidity can cause dryness of the

- eyes, nose and throat and may also increase the frequency of static electricity shocks.
- Relative humidity above 80 per cent can be associated with fatigue and reports of "stuffiness". If relative humidity is consistently high or low, call in an air conditioning expert to conduct a review.
- Ventilation refers to the movement of air and rate of fresh air input. Air movement of less than 0.1 metres per second can lead to stuffy rooms whereas above 0.2 metres per second draughts can be felt. AS/NZS 1668 Part 2 1991 Mechanical ventilation for acceptable indoor-air quality sets out the absolute minimum requirements for fresh air. For each person, a minimum rate of ten litres per second per person for general office space or 10 litres per second for every 10 square metres of floor space recommended.
- Photocopiers
 - Photocopiers and laser printers produce ozone gas during operation. It is possible to smell ozone at a concentration of between 0.01 and 0.02 parts per million (ppm), well below the Australian Exposure Standard of 0.1 ppm. Ozone does not build up in the air. It breaks down into oxygen quickly after is it released into the air. At concentrations above the Exposure Standard limit ozone can cause eye and upper respiratory tract irritation, headache and temporary loss of the ability to smell.
 - To keep ozone levels well below acceptable limits:
 - have photocopiers regularly serviced.
 - ensure that an ozone filter is fitted to photocopiers and laser printers.
 - ensure that there is adequate ventilation.
 - Where practicable, photocopiers are not placed in or in close proximity to the personal workstations of office employees because of possible discomfort from the heat, light and noise generated during the photocopying process.
- Lighting
 - Suitable light levels based on AS/NZS 1680 - 1990 Interior lighting are:
 - General background 200 Lux
 - Routine office work (typing, filing) 400 Lux
 - Work with poor contrast (proof reading) 600 Lux
 - A good rule of thumb for personal space is to allocate 6.25 square metres per individual workstation, including furniture and fittings, but excluding passageways and amenities. Ten square metres per person for the general, air-conditioned office areas including passageways and amenities, is recommended in AS/NZS 1668 Part 2 - 1991 Mechanical ventilation for acceptable indoor-air quality.
- Entry and exit
 - The means of entry and exit to and from the workplace shall be safe. This may include ensuring that employees with special needs or disabilities can safely enter and leave the workplace.
 - Entries and exits should be slip-resistant under wet and dry conditions.
 - Aisles and walkways should be at least 600 mm wide and kept free of furniture or other obstructions. Where it is necessary to clearly define entry and exit routes, the boundaries of the route should be marked by a permanent line of white, yellow or

other contrasting colour at least 50 mm wide or by glowing markers. Entry and exit routes, stairs and walkways should be adequately lit.

- Housekeeping
 - An untidy workplace can cause injuries resulting from slips and trips, therefore good housekeeping practices are essential for all workplaces. For example:
 - spills on floors should be cleaned up immediately
 - walkways should be kept clear of obstructions
 - work materials should be neatly stored
 - any waste should be regularly removed.
- Work areas
 - The layout of work areas shall be designed to provide sufficient clear space between furniture, fixtures and fittings so that employees can move about freely without strain or injury and also evacuate quickly in case of an emergency. Space for aisles, passages and access to other areas is needed in addition to the space around workstations.
 - In determining how much space is needed, the following should be considered:
 - the physical actions needed to perform the task
 - the need to move around while working
 - whether the task is to be performed from a sitting or standing position
 - access to workstations
 - the equipment to be handled and the personal protective equipment that may be worn to perform the work.
- Floors and other surfaces
 - Floor surfaces should be suitable for the work area. The choice of floor surfaces or coverings will depend on the type of work carried out at the workplace, as well as the materials used during the work process, the likelihood of spills and other contaminants, including dust, and the need for cleaning.
 - Floors should be inspected regularly and maintained to eliminate slip and trip hazards. Common examples of hazards include trailing cables, uneven edges or broken surfaces, gratings or covers, loose mats or carpet tiles. Floor surfaces require sufficient grip to prevent slipping, especially in areas that may become wet or contaminated. Cleaning methods should also take account of the potential for slips, which may be increased by the use of some cleaning agents.

Slips, Trip and Falls

- Slips are caused by slippery floors, uncleaned spillages or grip less shoes.
- Trips occur over objects lying on the ground or jutting out into aisles or because of poorly maintained floor surfaces.
- Falls can be from ladders or from standing on chairs to reach an object.
- These accidents can be avoided by simple planning and good housekeeping:
 - Traffic ways and aisles should be well lit, and be kept clear of materials, equipment, rubbish and electric leads.
 - Floors should be level and the use of mats discouraged. Spilled liquids and anything else dropped on the floor should be immediately picked up or cleaned away.
 - Free standing fittings should be completely stable or secured to the wall or floor. Filing cabinets should be placed so that they do not open into aisles and should never

be left with cabinet drawers open. For stability load cabinets starting from the bottom and do not open more than one drawer at a time.

- Office machines and equipment should be kept in good working order. Equipment using hand-fed processes such as electric staplers and paper guillotines should be guarded and staff trained in their proper use.
- Many pieces of equipment using electricity can mean trailing cables, overloaded circuits, broken plugs and sockets. Ensure that these dangers are seen to by qualified personnel.

Manual Handling

- For office employees, this can include tasks such as moving boxes of stores, filing, getting equipment from cupboards and filling the photocopying machine with paper.
- Refer to **WHS-PRO-020 Manual Handling** procedure for the requirements for tasks involving manual handling which are to be identified and risk assessed so that hazards are eliminated or controlled to prevent injuries or adverse health effects.

Office Inspections

- The WHS Officer is responsible for ensuring regular workplace inspections are conducted in the office areas at least every six months.
- Inspections shall be conducted using the **WHS-FOR-022.1 Office Safety Inspection Checklist**.
- In accordance with **WHS-PRO-034 Corrective and Preventative Action** Procedure, when any corrective and preventative actions are required the details shall be recorded in Pinnacle and included in the Corrective Actions register.

Workstation Assessments

- Sydney Harbour Federation Trust shall ensure keyboard equipment is properly selected, coordinated and adjusted. This helps to prevent a range of injuries caused by overuse and poor posture.
- Generally, the more a keyboard is used, the higher the risk of muscle soreness or injury. This does not mean that people should not use a keyboard extensively in their work; however, job design and adjustable equipment and furniture are important considerations for people who use computers for extensive periods of time.
- Where employees report discomfort at work due to the use of keyboards, an ergonomic assessment should be completed by a qualified Ergonomic Assessment Specialist.
- Following the assessment, the employee Manager shall discuss the outcomes and any adjustment if necessary.
- If an employee continues to experience discomfort or suffers a musculoskeletal injury, they are encouraged to seek medical advice from their doctor.