



TALKS

SUPERVISOR INSTRUCTIONS:

- Use toolbox trainings to encourage safety/environmental discussions during monthly meetings with employees.
- Campus Services' employees should maintain the employee sign-in sheet in their department's safety/environmental compliance binder as a record of training. All other groups should maintain a record of training in accordance with their Division's training procedures.

While office chairs are essential for providing comfort and support during our workday, they can pose various risks to employees' safety if not used and maintained properly. The right chair not only enhances a worker's comfort and productivity, but it also reduces the likelihood of a worker experiencing an accidental fall from the chair. It is also important to routinely inspect chairs for damage, including broken wheels and loose bolts. If a chair is found to be damaged, tag it "Damaged – Do Not Use" and immediately remove it from the area. This toolbox will highlight some of the hazards associated with improper use of chairs and identify preventive measures to ensure a safe work environment.



Photo Credit:

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/sciencetech/article-4520556/The-science-fall-chair.html>

Ergonomic Issues

Poorly designed or improperly adjusted office chairs can lead to ergonomic issues, including discomfort, musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs), and repetitive strain injuries (RSIs). Additionally, prolonged sitting and using incorrect posture while sitting (i.e. slouching) can place stress on the upper back and neck.

Preventive Measures:

- Select chairs that provide appropriate body support (i.e., back, arms, legs, and buttocks) and allow users to easily adjust the seat height, backrest angle, and armrests.
- Use footrests, when necessary, to maintain proper posture and reduce contact stress to the thighs and knees.
- Do not sit at the edge of the seat. Sit up straight and ensure the buttocks/hips are pushed all the way back on the seat and the back is in contact with the backrest.
- Take regular breaks to stretch and change sitting positions. Research has shown it is best to move for about 2 - 3 minutes every 20 - 30 minutes.

Falls from Chairs

Office chairs and stools with wheels can contribute to falls, especially on smooth or uneven surfaces or when used improperly. Over 45% of chair injuries occur when users are attempting to sit down. Most of these incidents occur due to the chair moving out from under the person.

SAFETY/ENVIRONMENTAL TOOLBOX TALKS – ROLLING CHAIRS AND STOOLS

Workers can also lose their balance while scooting around in the rolling chair, remaining seated and reaching for items.

Preventive Measures:

- Select chairs with proper wheels to ensure the chair moves safely and in a controlled manner on the various types of flooring. Some settings, like hospitals, have hard floor coverings, such as tile, vinyl/laminate, or hardwood; whereas other locations, like office spaces, are often carpeted. Hard floor coverings and carpets require very different wheels styles.
 - Soft rubber or polyurethane wheels are best for hardwood, tile, marble, cement, travertine, linoleum, and vinyl. The soft wheels provide the best floor protection for these floors, as they have a slight “give” to conform to the hard floor and are less likely to glide away from someone attempting to sit down.
 - Hard wheels made of nylon or metal are best for carpeted areas. While these wheels tend to glide on hard surfaces, they roll really well on carpet.
- Ensure that the work area is free from unnecessary obstacles and clutter.
- Exercise caution when rising, sitting, or reaching from a rolling chair or stool. It is best to stand up when you need to reach for an item.
 - Stand when reaching for something, do not remain seated on the rolling chair or stool.
 - Grasp the rolling chair or stool whenever you attempt to sit or rise to ensure that it does not unexpectedly move.
 - If the chair has armrests, hold them when sitting or standing. If armrests are not present, hold on to the seat pan to prevent the chair/stool from rolling away.

Tip-Over Risk

Chairs with unstable bases, uneven legs, or defects can tip over, causing injuries to workers.

Preventive Measures:

- Select chairs with a stable and wide base to reduce the risk of tipping over. Typically, office chairs and medical stools have 5 legs on casters, which allows for greater stability and mobility.
- Routinely inspect chairs for defects or damage, including broken wheels, loose bolts, etc. If a chair is found to be damaged, tag it “Damaged – Do Not Use” and immediately remove it from service for repair or replacement.
- Do not sit at the edge of the seat or lean the chair or stool. Sit up straight and ensure hips and back are far back on the seat.