

Chapter 5.2

Office and General Work Area Safety

This could be you . . .

Two employees were burned by candles on their desks.

One employee was hurt when an over-loaded bookcase fell.

An employee slipped and fell on a freshly waxed floor, resulting in a lost-time case.

1. Applicability of this chapter

You are required to follow this chapter if you work at JSC or a JSC field site.

2. What this chapter covers

This chapter covers the basic controls for common hazards and safe work practices in offices and general work areas. The requirements and recommendations in this chapter stem from JSC's mishap and close call data as well as federal regulations.

3. What you need to do to be safe in your office

To increase your safety in the office or other work area, you shall follow the requirements in this chapter and think about consequences before taking action.

4. Doors, aisles, and hallways

Follow these rules to stay safe in doors, aisles, and hallways:

- a. Keep required fire doors closed at all times. You may leave fire doors open if they have automatic releases and self-closing hardware, but don't block them with anything that would interfere with their operation.
- b. If you see yellow stripes on the floor in front of a door and an OPEN DOOR SLOWLY sign, open the door with care. It opens into the flow of traffic, and you could hit someone.
- c. Don't store anything in aisles and hallways. Keep aisles and passageways clear and in good repair. Remove or mark anything that blocks or sticks into an aisle or passageway. Maintain the minimum widths for exit routes shown in the diagram in Attachment 5.1A, Appendix 5. Also, see Chapter 5.1, paragraphs 9 and 13. These are the minimum acceptable widths based on the National Fire Protection Association Standard 101, "Life Safety Code." The JSC Furniture Office may require wider exit widths to allow them to move furniture easily.

Part 5, Safety and health practices for everyone

- d. Cover sharp or pointed objects that block or stick into an aisle or a passageway to prevent someone from being cut or stabbed.
- e. If you spill something or see a spill, stop what you are doing and clean it up. You will prevent JSC's most common mishap: slips, trips, and falls.
- f. Place broken glass in a puncture-proof container or wrap it in paper and label it "Glass" before putting it in a trash can.
- g. Make sure there is enough safe clearance when you use mechanical handling equipment such as pallet jacks or forklifts.

5. Walking and working surfaces

Follow these practices in your work area and building:

- a. Keep floors and working surfaces as clean and dry as possible.
- b. Maintain good drainage in areas with wet processes such as washing areas. Provide dry places to stand with false floors, platforms, mats, or other means.
- c. Protect floor openings, open pits, tanks, vats, or ditches with covers or guardrails. If you can't protect them yourself, report them to your supervisor. Make sure others don't fall into any of these openings by using signs or cones or posting a guard.
- d. Keep outside walking and working surfaces free of ice, snow, mud, grease, or other stuff that may make them unsafe. You may use sand, cinders, or other approved material to reduce slip hazards. Report any areas you can't clear, cover, or block off to Work Control, x32038.

6. Telephones and electrical equipment

Electrical equipment and telephones cause many office mishaps. Here's what to do to stay safe:

- a. Use desks, tables, and other equipment to cover all floor telephone jacks and electrical outlets (commonly known as tombstones), ensuring your feet are clear of them, so they are not a tripping hazard.
- b. Don't place telephone or electrical cords across aisles unless you cover the cords with rubber channels designed for this purpose.
- c. Use only personal equipment that is listed by Underwriters Laboratories (UL, Factory Mutual [FM]), or other recognized testing laboratories and that is in good working condition, such as coffee makers, radios, or lamps at work.
- d. You may use UL-rated forced-air space heaters only if they have a tip-over cutoff switch. Never use a radiant space heater. NOTE: The Center Operations Directorate may restrict the use of space heaters for other reasons, such as energy conservation. When space heaters are allowed, they shall follow the requirements above.

- e. Occasionally check all of your electrical cords, plugs, and outlets for damage or frayed points. Replace any that show signs of excessive wear.

7. Power strips and extension cords

Don't connect power strips or extension cords together (that is, "daisy chain" them) since you risk overloading the circuit. You may only use extension cords under certain circumstances. Follow the rules below:

- a. You may use extension cords only under the following circumstances:
 - 1. Temporary work such as buffing floors, remodeling, or construction.
 - 2. To provide power for temporary decorations or special events. This is limited to 90 days or less.
 - 3. Development projects or experiments. You shall remove the extension cords at the end of the project.
- b. Power strips and extension cords shall meet the following:
 - 1. Use only UL-listed, double-insulated cords or power strips that are rated for the current they will carry.
 - 2. Never run the cords through walls or ceilings.
 - 3. Try to avoid running cords behind furniture such as filing cabinets or bookcases where they could be pinched or damaged. If this is necessary, leave a space behind the furniture for the cord.

8. Computer workstations

Computers cause many small injuries that get worse if not corrected right away. Here's what to do:

- a. Your furniture shall be ergonomically designed so that you have no discomfort when working at your computer. See Chapter 5.5, "Ergonomics," for more ergonomic recommendations. Here are some general ones:
 - 1. Place your keyboard and monitor directly in front of you.
 - 2. Adjust your chair to fit you and make sure it has firm back support.
 - 3. Use soft wrist rests at the keyboard and mouse.
 - 4. Place your monitor screen so you see no glare.
 - 5. Make Sure your overhead hutch is secured to the desk or table it sits on. Contact Logistics Work Control for help.
- b. To clean the monitor, spray cleaning solution onto a cloth, then wipe the monitor. JSC has had several small fires and electrical shorts from cleaners sprayed directly onto screens.

Part 5, Safety and health practices for everyone

9. Office supplies and equipment

Knowing what office supplies are in your office and how to store them properly is key in this area. Follow these rules:

- a. Don't store office supplies, equipment, or anything else in any building's mechanical rooms. Many fires begin in mechanical rooms, so it's best never to store anything, especially anything that burns, in these areas.
- b. Store all office supplies in cabinets or on shelves in areas designed for storage.
- c. Keep only small quantities of flammable or combustible fluids, such as cleaning supplies or printer toners and inks. Store quantities greater than 5 gallons in fireproof cabinets or bulk storage areas.
- d. Maintain material safety data sheets on all spray paints and any hazardous office supplies (for example, liquid paper, copier toner) used in greater than home-use quantities. You can download Material Safety Data Sheets from the Health Home Page at <http://ks.jsc.nasa.gov/haz/msds/msdssearchform.cfm>. Direct questions about hazardous materials to the Clinical Services Branch at (281) 483-7512. See Part 9, "Safety and health practices for hazardous materials," of this Handbook for more information on hazardous materials.
- e. Keep combustible materials such as wall-mounted combustible materials, paper, tapes, and wood to a minimum.
- f. Don't have open flames such as candles in your office; they could burn you or start a fire.
- g. Don't hang anything from the ceiling. It could stress the ceiling or dislodge a ceiling tile.
- h. Don't use halogen lamps. The bulbs get extremely hot and could easily start a fire.

10. Office furniture

Defective or improperly placed furniture has injured some people at JSC. Follow these prevention guidelines:

- a. Periodically inspect your office furniture for worn, cracked, or loose parts.
- b. Don't put anything that could fall and injure you on top of bookcases, storage cabinets, and large equipment. Small personal items such as pictures or plants, if stable, are allowed.
- c. Secure books on top of furniture with bookends.
- d. Keep at least an 18-inch clearance between the deflectors of sprinkler heads and materials or furniture below. This doesn't apply to cabinets or shelving placed against a wall unless the shelving is directly under a sprinkler head. Shelves or equipment against a wall or mounted to a wall may penetrate the 18-inch clearance unless they are directly below a sprinkler head. In that case, the 18-inch clearance applies.

- e. Leave adequate space for proper activation and maintenance around heat or smoke detectors.
- f. For stackable bookshelves:

<i>If your bookshelves are located . . .</i>	<i>Then you may stack . . .</i>
Against a wall, furniture, or secured panel	Four shelves
Free-standing	Three shelves

- g. Multi-shelf, single-unit (non-stackable) bookcases are acceptable if they are against a wall, furniture, or secured panel.
- h. Remember that while new file cabinets generally have satisfactory safety features, older units, which are prevalent on site, do not. Follow these practices for file cabinets:
 1. To prevent file cabinets from tipping over, secure them to the floor if possible or, at a minimum, weigh them down at the lowest drawer.
 2. Open only one drawer at a time, and be certain to latch closed drawers that are not in use. If more than one drawer is open, the unit can become unstable and tip.
 3. Never switch drawers between cabinets. This can render safety devices, including drawer stops and latches, inactive if they don't match between the cabinet and drawer. The drawer may seem to fit, but it may not be properly secured and could potentially cause injury.

11. If you have a disability

Contact the Equal Opportunity Programs Office at (281) 483-0607. JSC makes every effort to accommodate employees according to the Americans with Disabilities Act.

12. If you visit other work areas

If you visit other work areas, you shall ask the occupants of that area what the safety rules are and follow them. For example, if you visit a warehouse, know and follow the requirements in Chapter 6.3, "Warehouse Safety and Health," of this Handbook. See the table of contents of this Handbook for a complete listing of safety and health rules for various areas and operations.

13. Jewelry in other work areas

If you do any maintenance or troubleshooting on any electrical or mechanical system or subsystem, you shall first remove all rings, watches, jewelry, or other metallic objects that are electrical conductors or that could be caught on sharp objects or corners.

Part 5, Safety and health practices for everyone

14. Manual material handling

Attachment 5.2A, Appendix 5B, contains guidelines for safe manual lifting and material handling.