

**OFFICE SAFETY POLICY**

**Alexander County Government  
Office Safety**

**I. Office Safety**

- A. Office work can be more hazardous than is commonly thought since many accidents occur during ordinary office routines. Following are some best practices that can help make your office areas safe.
- a) Every employee should see that his or her desk and work area is clean and orderly. Pick up items such as pencils or paper clips and wipe up any spilled liquids. Good housekeeping is the key to a safe office environment.
  - b) Slips, trips, and falls are some of the most common causes of injuries to office workers. Keep an eye open for loose or rough floor covering, loose tiles, or carpeting that can create a tripping hazard. Clean up spills immediately, or put up wet floor signs until help can be summoned.
  - c) Be extra cautious when you come up to a door that can be pushed toward you. Take it easy when pushing one open. Also, slow down when coming to a blind corner.
  - d) Haste when walking between desks can result in bruises and falls. Watch out for electrical cords and keep electrical cords out of aisle-ways. If a cord needs to be run through the walkways, ensure that a cord cover is used.
  - e) Never run electrical cords through doorways as it creates a pinch point that can break the integrity of the cord.
  - f) All files, desk, and table drawers should be kept closed when not in use. If you open them, close them. Never open more than one file drawer at a time.
  - g) Overloading the top drawers of unsecured file cabinets can cause injuries and damage to the file cabinet if they tip over. Cabinets should be loaded evenly and should be secured to adjacent cabinets or to walls so they cannot fall over. File cabinets should have an interlocking device that allows only one drawer to be opened at a time, and drawers should have stops so they cannot inadvertently be pulled all the way out of the cabinet.
  - h) Furniture such as tables, desks, and chairs must be maintained in good condition and free from sharp corners, projecting edges, wobbly legs, etc.
  - i) Tilted chairs can be a hazard when improperly used. Take care to assure that they are in good condition. Learn the limits.
  - j) Never use chairs, desks or other office furniture as a makeshift ladder. Use a stepladder or step stool and don't over-reach.
  - k) Keep the blades of a paper cutter closed when not in use. All paper cutters should be guarded.
  - l) Pencils are safest when carried point down in shirt pockets.
  - m) Scissors, paper cutters, glass, and razor blades can cause painful injuries. Report and treat such injuries at once to protect yourself from infection.
  - n) Paper can cut and it hurts. Use a sponge or other wetting device for envelopes instead of your tongue. Use rubber finger guards when working with stacks of paper.
  - o) Keep paper clips, thumb tacks, and pins in a place where they can't bite. Even a little scratch can get infected.

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- p) Be sure all electric office equipment is grounded and that the cord is in good condition. If a machine gives you an electric shock or starts smoking, unplug it and report it.
- q) For computers, use surge protectors to protect your equipment from electrical power surges. Outlet strips may also allow more electrical equipment to be plugged in safely at one outlet/location, but look at the rating of the device and do not overload the circuit.
- r) Store heavy office supplies at a height between your knees and shoulders. Use proper lifting techniques for moving paper supplies to copy machines or printers.

## II. Ergonomics

With the increased use of computers in every line of work, it is important to review your computer workstation setup. If you spend the majority of your time in front of a computer, then you should be aware of some basic ergonomic principles that will help improve your comfort and minimize stress caused from repetitive motion and poor posture.

### A. Computer Workstations

- a) Ergonomics is the science of designing your workstation to fit you better.
  1. Start by adjusting the chair height and keyboard to achieve a neutral wrist position, with the forearms roughly parallel to the floor, with your keyboard or other work within a range of 2" above or below your seated elbow height. If a non-adjustable work surface must be used, adjust the chair height to achieve a neutral wrist position and use a footrest, if needed, to make the workstation more comfortable.
  2. Select a sturdy chair with a firm padded back, adjustable arms, and with a back that adjusts vertically and horizontally. By adjusting the backrest to support your lumbar curve (lower back), you can help support and improve your posture, which will ultimately improve your comfort. You may need to lock the tilt feature to use the backrest when keying.
  3. Locate the computer monitor so the screen is 18 to 30 inches away. The *top* of the screen should be at seated eye level or below to help prevent head and neck strain. If you wear bifocals, you may want to have the monitor below eye level.
  4. Organize your desk or worktable to accommodate the materials and equipment you need. Place the things you need regularly (such as a telephone or calculator) within easy reach. Use a chair that swivels to avoid unnecessary twisting and reaching. The base should have five legs for greater stability.



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5. Sit up straight! Poor posture can increase problems with your back, neck and shoulders and increase the strain you feel in these areas.
6. If you use a mouse or other screen-pointing device, locate it next to the keyboard on the side of your dominant hand.
7. If you enter data into your computer from hard copies, use a document holder positioned next to your VDT screen. This helps keep your eyes focused at the same distance and reduces eyestrain associated with moving your eyes from the document to the computer.
8. Work surfaces should have rounded edges so you do not bump or rest your wrists against sharp surfaces. Use a cushioned pad or wrist rest to support your wrists when working at a computer workstation. This support can reduce the pressure on your wrists and reduce strain as well. Try to work with your wrists in a straight (neutral) position.
9. Glare can produce eyestrain. If overhead lights or windows create glare on your screen, glare screens can be placed over the front of your monitor. You can also reduce glare on your screen by tilting the front of the VDT screen down.
10. If you spend significant time on the telephone, use a telephone headset to reduce neck and shoulder strain.
11. Be sure to blink every so often as your eyes will get dry if focusing on an object for long periods of time. It is also helpful to glance away from the monitor regularly to focus on a distant object.
12. While ergonomics can help improve your comfort and productivity, remember that micro-breaks can also be beneficial. During a micro-break, you might perform other job tasks that allow you to get up and move around. Filing, making copies, or performing other functions can provide that micro-break which allows you to increase your circulation, relieve tension and improve your mental attitude. Try stretching while you are taking a micro-break to get your limbs working freely again.