

# 1. INTRODUCTION

- ❖ Working in the general office setting involves duties including:
  - Answering phone calls
  - Providing information
  - Open, sort and route mail
  - File and photocopy documents
  - Working with the computer e.g. letterwriting, dataentry
  - Process reports, applications and forms

# 2. HEALTH AND SAFETY HAZARDS

## ❖ Physical Hazards

- Noise of photocopiers and ventilation may contribute to annoyance and result in inability to concentrate
- Poor lighting can give rise to eye strain especially in computer work

## ❖ Biological hazards

- Usually not a problem - Legionnaire's disease if the general ventilation system is not properly maintained

## ❖ Chemical Hazards

- Usually not a problem - excessive accumulation of ozone from photocopiers can lead to eye and respiratory tract irritation or headache

## ❖ Ergonomic Hazards

- Cumulative trauma disorders as a result of:
  - repetitive motions e.g. typing
  - prolonged sitting
  - awkward posture e.g. twisting / bending to fetch materials, working with neck/wrists bent
  - lifting heavy files/folders/boxes
- Poorly design computer workstation design
- Can manifest as neck, shoulder, arms and wrists discomfort, numbness, tingling, aches and weakness

## ❖ Psychosocial Hazards

- Stress and fatigue due to paced/urgent work, boredom, monotony, working alone
- Violence (physical or verbal) from unsatisfied public

## ❖ Safety Hazards

- Risk of injury due to:
  - Cuts and laceration from sharp scissors, paper cutter
  - Slips and trips from obstructed passage, trailing electrical cords, slippery floors, open file drawer
  - Electrical shocks from improperly grounded/faulty equipment

- Fall of object from a height
- Risk of fire due to faulty electrical appliances or overloaded sockets

# 3. PREVENTION AND CONTROL

- ❖ Ensure that you receive adequate training e.g. typing, dataentry

## ❖ General environmental conditions:

- ✓ Ensure adequate ventilation to remove odors, gases, humidity and vapors
- ✓ Adequate illumination and comfortable temperature
- ✓ Floors constructed of non-slip material

- ❖ Workstation at a comfortable height with adjustable seats

- ❖ Rearrange work area so that tasks, equipments and materials are within easy reach to avoid stretching/twisting

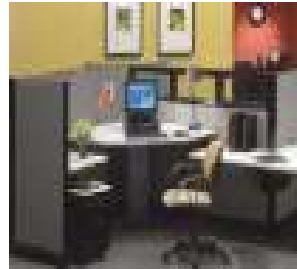
## ❖ Ergonomics

- ✓ Learn proper manual handling/lifting
- ✓ Take frequent rest breaks especially from repetitive tasks
- ✓ Move heavy items using trolleys

- ❖ Task rotation-to change repetitive patterns of work to reduce monotony and slows down development of fatigue e.g. rotate between typing and sorting files

# *WORKING IN AN OFFICE*

- ❖ Ensure equipments such as photocopiers and laser printers are regularly maintained and place photocopiers as far away as from the workstation
- ❖ Electrical safety:
  - ✓ Careful maintenance of the earthing/grounding arrangement of equipments
  - ✓ No overloading of electrical sockets
  - ✓ Use equipments of good quality
  - ✓ Replace electrical cords if wires are exposed
  - ✓ Switch off all appliances at the end of the work day
- ❖ Know where the fire extinguishers, alarms, emergency exits and designated emergency assembly points are-do not block fire exits
- ❖ No smoking
- ❖ Good housekeeping helps to prevent accidents caused by blocked passageways, slips and trips
- ❖ Adequate washing and sanitary facilities
- ❖ Learn first aid and ensure that first aid boxes are available



**OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH DIVISION  
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SERVICES**

*FACTS ON THE HEALTH  
AND SAFETY RISKS*