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Chapter 5.2 Office and General Work Area Safety and Health

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.

5.2.1 Applicability of this chapter

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

5.2.2 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.

5.2.3 What you need to do to be safe in your office

To increase your safety in the office or other work areas, you shall follow the requirements in this chapter and think about consequences before taking action. Also follow the work shift limits in paragraph 2.15.3.1 of NPR 1800.1.

5.2.4 Doors, aisles, and hallways

5.2.4.1 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 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 blocking or protruding into an aisle or passageway. Maintain the minimum widths for exit routes shown in the diagram in Attachment 5.1A, Appendix F. Also, see Chapter 5.1, paragraphs 5.19 and 5.1.13. 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.
- d. Cover sharp or pointed objects along 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.

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- g. Make sure there is enough safe clearance when you use mechanical handling equipment such as pallet jacks or forklifts.

5.2.5 Walking and working surfaces

5.2.5.1 Follow these practices in your work area and building:

- Keep floors and working surfaces as clean and dry as possible.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.

5.2.6 Telephones and electrical equipment

5.2.6.1 Electrical equipment and telephones cause many office mishaps. To stay safe:

- 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.
- Don't place telephone or electrical cords across aisles unless you cover the cords with rubber channels designed for this purpose.
- Use only personal equipment listed by Underwriters Laboratories (UL), Factory Mutual (FM), or other recognized testing laboratories, and in good working condition, such as coffee makers, radios, or lamps at work.
- 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.
- Occasionally check all of your electrical cords, plugs, and outlets for damage or frayed points. Replace any showing signs of damage or excessive wear.

5.2.7 Power strips and extension cords

5.2.7.1 Don't connect power strips or extension cords together (that is, "daisy chain" them) to avoid the risk overloading the circuit. Follow the rules below:

- Extension cords are allowed only under the following circumstances:
 - (1) Temporary work such as buffing floors, remodeling, or construction.
 - (2) 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.

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b. Power strips and extension cords shall meet the following:

- (1) Use only UL-listed, double-insulated cords or power strips 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.
- (4) Never use power strips with high load equipment such as refrigerators, coffee pots, space heaters, microwave ovens, toaster, fans and shop equipment – essentially anything with an electric motor and possibly a pulley and belt. Power strips are ONLY designed for use with a high concentration of low-powered loads such as computers, audio and video equipment, musical instruments, home movie lighting, home workshops, and laboratory equipment.

5.2.8 Computer workstations

5.2.8.1 Computers workstations can cause many small injuries that worsen if not corrected right away. Follow these rules:

- a. Workstation furniture shall be ergonomically designed so that you have no discomfort when working at your computer. See paragraphs 5.5.5 and 5.5.6 in Chapter 5.5, "Ergonomics," for recommendations in setting up your workstation.
- 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.

5.2.9 Office environment

Everyone in the office should model good behavior and expect it from co-workers. Keep your work environment clean. Use spill-proof containers to hold beverages. Clean up any spills or crumbs daily. Dispose of any food refuse in the centralized trash area and not in the trash receptacle at your desk. At least once a week, wipe down anything used daily such as, your keyboard, your mouse and your phone.

5.2.10 Office supplies and equipment

5.2.10.1 Knowing what office supplies are in your office and how to store them properly is important. 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 Safety Data Sheets (SDSs) on all spray paints and any hazardous office supplies (for example, liquid paper, copier toner) used in greater than home-use quantities. Download SDSs

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from the [JSC SDS Database](https://nasa.sharepoint.com/sites/jsc-oh/SitePages/haz-com.aspx) at <https://nasa.sharepoint.com/sites/jsc-oh/SitePages/haz-com.aspx> . Direct questions about hazardous materials to Occupational Health at x36726. See Part 9, "Safety and health practices for hazardous materials," 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.
- i. Follow the requirements in Chapter 7.5, paragraph 7.5.3.3, for laser pointers.

5.2.11 Refrigerators and freezers

5.2.11.1 Shared refrigerators and freezers are a potential source of foodborne illness and disease. Employees shall follow the rules below:

- a. Post a sign on the door exterior that reads **"Food and Drink Only."**
- b. Set the refrigerator at 40°F or below to effectively slow the growth of most bacteria.
- c. Set the freezer temperature at 0°F.
- d. Establish a schedule for cleaning. Discard perishable foods left in the refrigerator at least once a week. A general rule of thumb for cooked leftovers is 4 days.
- e. Defrost freezers when the ice thickness reaches ½ inch.
- f. Place an opened box of baking soda on a shelf to keep the refrigerator smelling fresh and help eliminate odors.
- g. Avoid using solvent cleaning agents, abrasives, and all cleansers that may impart a chemical taste to food or ice cubes, or cause damage to the interior finish of the refrigerator. Follow the manufacturer's instructions.

5.2.12 Ice makers and ice machines

5.2.12.1 Many JSC buildings have installed ice machines in their facilities. Some of the ice is used for transporting or cooling specimens and the rest is used by employees. Dispenser machines are preferable to ice bins since bins have a greater potential for contamination. Follow these practices for safe ice handling:

- a. Clean and sanitize all ice makers, regardless of type, per the manufacturers' recommendations.
- b. If the ice is not for human consumption, ensure it is plainly marked **"Not for Human Consumption."**
- c. Follow these requirements for ice bins designated for human consumption:
 - (1) Ensure hands are thoroughly washed with soap and water or hand sanitizer before handling.
 - (2) Touch the ice scoop handle only when dispensing.
 - (3) Ensure containers and scoops used to store or transfer ice are sanitized routinely.

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- (4) Ensure the scoop does not come in contact with containers or other surfaces.
- (5) Return scoop to proper storage location after use.
- (6) NEVER use your bare hands, personal containers or cups to collect ice.
- (7) NEVER leave the scoop inside the ice bin.
- d. Contact Occupational Health for recommendations on sanitary procedures or before purchasing an ice machine.

NOTE: This paragraph does not apply to retail food establishments and the Aaron Cohen Childcare Facility.

5.2.13 Office furniture

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

- a. Periodically inspect your office furniture for worn, cracked, or loose parts.
- b. Don't put anything on top of bookcases, storage cabinets, and large equipment that could fall and injure someone. 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. Shelves, cabinets, and 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 and 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. New file cabinets generally have satisfactory safety features, but 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.

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- (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.

5.2.14 If you have a disability or serious health condition

Employees with a temporary or permanent disability or serious health condition(s) who require an accommodation to enable them to perform their essential job functions, shall contact the Center Disability Program Manager about the NASA Reasonable Accommodations process. (AJ/Office of Equal Opportunity and Diversity: x30607 or jsc-oeod@mail.nasa.gov).

5.2.15 If you visit other work areas

When visiting 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 6.2, "Warehouse Safety and Health." See the table of contents for a complete listing of safety and health rules for various areas and operations. If visiting Ellington Field for a tour, contact the Ellington Field Division Office, x49767. If traveling to Ellington Field on work business and you require hangar use, contact the Ellington Field Ground Safety Office at x49609 or stop by the office in E276, room 1003.

5.2.16 Jewelry in other work areas

Employees who do any maintenance or troubleshooting on any electrical or mechanical system or subsystem 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.

5.2.17 Manual material handling

JSC guidelines for safe manual lifting and material handling are on the [JSC Ergonomics Program](https://nasa.sharepoint.com/sites/jsc-oh/Shared%20Documents/SafeLifting.pdf) webpage at <https://nasa.sharepoint.com/sites/jsc-oh/Shared%20Documents/SafeLifting.pdf>.

5.2.18 Telework

When teleworking, take measures to prevent injuries similar to those in this chapter. Pay special attention to ergonomic issues when setting up your workstation. Follow the same ergonomic principles as you use at work. This applies whether you are working from home, at the airport, or even at another NASA Center.