

RISK MANAGEMENT
SAFETY AND
LOSS CONTROL

Risky Business

SAFETY & LOSS CONTROL NEWS — DECEMBER 2020

VOL 5, NO 12

**THIS
MONTH'S
SAFETY
EMPHASIS IS
OFFICE SAFETY**

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Avoid Cubicle Complacency

Many people consider construction sites, working with or near heavy equipment or tools as hazardous job tasks. However, office employees who spend a majority of their time in a climate-controlled office can become complacent to hazards that may be present. These include slips, trips, falls, ergonomics, lifting, electrical hazards, and office fires.

Many office injuries can be prevented when employees and supervisors recognize hazards and implement changes to eliminate or mitigate them. Simple steps, such as closing filing cabinet drawers after use and keeping walkways and aisles clear of clutter, can help protect employees against office injuries. Adjusting workstations for comfort and using proper lifting methods reduces the likelihood of ergonomic injuries. Never become complacent to the hazards that are present in office environments!

~Kayvan Vafa



A Step in the Wright Direction

by Norman Wright

One Saturday morning, while stationed with the Army in metropolitan Washington, D.C., my wife presented me with a list of groceries to pick up at the base commissary. Before getting into the car, I had been going through a culturing procedure that we would be using the next week in my laboratory. I got into the car and proceeded to the commissary. Fifteen minutes later, I found myself in the parking lot of the laboratory where I worked. The problem is I don't remember how I got there. When I left base housing, I turned left

instead of right and then proceeded along the road leading to the lab, which took me through four stop signs, three stoplights, four right-hand turns, two left-hand turns, and a guard station where I would be required to stop and show ID. All this I did without recollection.

You may find this story beyond belief because, intuitively, people are under the misconception that as long as our eyes are open, we see everything in our field of vision. The brain processes a lot of information every second and will, at the time, eliminate that information that it

Wright Direction *continued...*

feels is not necessary. We may be looking for our keys, but because they are in a place where they are not usually kept, even though we may look directly at them, our brain will tell us the keys are not there because the keys are never there and we are too busy looking for where they should be. We may ignore the unexpected, no matter how large or brightly colored.

Just as you may intuitively believe that seeing is a matter only of opening one's eyes, cognitive scientists once assumed that visual perception was like taking a picture – that the mind recorded everything the eyes took in. Studies of visual perception have increasingly demonstrated how startlingly little people see when we're not paying attention, a phenomenon known as "inattention blindness."

Experimental psychologists have documented many ways that our perception of the world is limited, not by our eyes and ears, but by our minds. We, contrary to popular belief in "multi-tasking," process only one stream of information at a time, filtering other information from awareness.

We think important objects will grab our attention, but they don't.



What the eye sees



What the mind perceives

The most common injuries in office settings are caused by falls according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Office workers are 2 to 2.5 times more likely to suffer a disabling injury from falls than non-office workers. The most common cause for falls in the office is tripping over an open desk or filing drawer, electrical cords loose carpeting, or objects in hall and walk ways. Inattention blindness plays a role in many workplace incidents. The filing cabinet drawer is never open, so we see it as shut even though it is open, causing us to trip.

We need to focus on the task at hand. Following these tips should help avoid falls in the office:

- Look before you walk -- make sure

(SEE WRIGHT DIRECTION PAGE 4)

KNOW THE RISK

Avoid or limit your time where COVID-19 spreads more easily:




Crowded places with many people nearby

Close-contact settings, especially with **close-range conversations**



Confined spaces with poor airflow



The risk increases the longer you spend in any of these settings and in places where these factors overlap.



For more information, visit <https://cchealth.org/>.

Portable Space Heater & Appliance

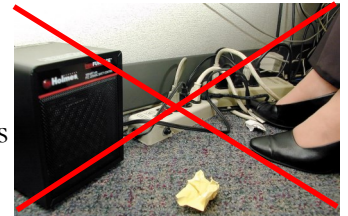
Because portable electric space heaters and other personal appliances can pose significant fire and electric shock hazards, the County prohibits the personal use of these appliances in the workplace. County operating ranges for heating and air conditioning are maintained between 68 degrees Fahrenheit for winter heating and 76 degrees Fahrenheit for cooling year during the summer.

Here are some tips for keeping your office safe and warm when it's cold outside:

- ⇒ Dress for the weather
- ⇒ Wear layers that you can remove and add on to maintain your comfort
- ⇒ Report temperature concerns to your supervisor

Tips for safe use of appliances:

- ⇒ Appliances should only be used in dedicated break and lunch rooms.
- ⇒ Inspect appliances for cracked or broken plugs or loose connections before each use. If frayed, worn or damaged, do not use.
- ⇒ Don't use appliances near soft cubicle walls.
- ⇒ Never leave an appliance unattended; turn it off when you leave.
- ⇒ Plug appliances directly into a wall outlet. Do not use an extension cord or power strip because this can lead to overloading of the electrical outlet.



Wright Direction *continued...*

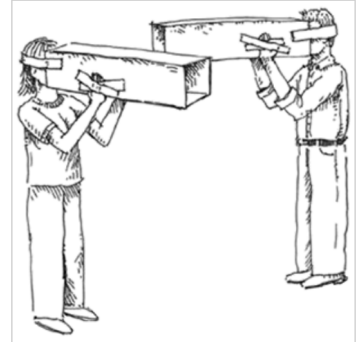
the walkway is clear.

- If you're done with a drawer, close it immediately.
- Report any loose carpeting, electrical cords, etc. to someone who can have them fixed.
- Clean up spills (even if you didn't spill it), picking up objects that are out of place, etc.

We think important objects and events in our world will automatically grab our attention, but they often don't, particularly when our attention is focused on something else. Our mind will block out what it perceives as unimportant. We fail to notice unexpected objects or events because our attention is focused elsewhere. Our mind will focus on the task at hand and ignore objects that are not where they are expected.

In my case, my mind was focused on getting me to the lab, allowing me to switch to an autopilot mode, taking me to the lab instead of the commissary, not seeing anything along the way. This story had a positive outcome with just a slight inconvenience of driving out of my way.

Not all cases of cognitive blindness turn out well; now that you know about this phenomenon, what are you going to do to outsmart your mind and stay safe?



See answers
page 8.



**How many
hazards can
you find?**

Office Electrical Safety

As a source of energy, electricity is used without much thought to the hazards it can pose. Because it is a familiar part of our day to day lives, it is often treated without the proper precautions. When working with electrically-powered equipment, electrical hazards, such as shock and fire, are present. These hazards are found at home and at work. Electrical accidents at work usually occur as a result of faulty or defective equipment, unsafe installation, or misuse of equipment. All workers should treat electrical equipment and components with caution!

Safe Electrical Practices

There are various different types of electrical hazards present in office environments. Some can be eliminated by following safe electrical practices. The following information can help eliminate hazards from ungrounded equipment and overloaded outlets:

Preventing Overloading	
Have an adequate number of outlets available for all equipment	Don't overload electrical outlets
Don't over-use extension cords or power strips	Don't 'daisy-chain' power strips or extension cords

Grounded Equipment	
Purchase equipment cords that have grounded three-prong plugs	Never remove the third (grounding) prong from any three-prong piece of equipment

Electrical Cord Hazards

Electrical cords, whether hardwired to equipment, extension cords, or power strips, are present in every office environment. As such, employees must understand basic safe work practices when handling or using these cords. The following are examples of electrical cord hazards and associated safe work practices to avoid potential injury or fires:

Defective/Frayed Cords

When the outer jacket of a cord is damaged, the cord may no longer be water-resistant. The exposed insulation can absorb moisture, which may result in a short-circuit or excessive current leakage to ground. If wires are exposed, they may shock a worker who contacts them. Before using an electrical cord:

- Examine electric cords on a routine basis for fraying and exposed wiring. If damaged cords are identified, tag them with "Do Not Use" or similar language
- Replace damaged cords. If this is not possible, the tool or cord may need to be replaced

⇒ **Improper Placements of Cords:**

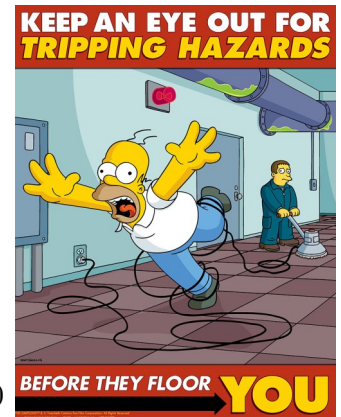
Cords should not be pulled or dragged over nails, hooks, or other sharp objects that may cut the insulation. Do not place cords on radiators, steam pipes, walls, or windows, or under carpets, rugs or furniture.

⇒ **Using Cords to Disconnect Power:**

Never pull a plug by the cord when disconnecting power. To safely remove a plug from an outlet, take a firm grip on the plug itself and pull.

Office Slips, Trips, and Falls

Injuries from slips, trips, and falls can happen to anyone at any time. Based on 2018 data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), over 34,190 private industry, state, and local government employees missed one or more days of work from injuries from falls on the same or to lower levels, with 791 fatalities from such falls. These accidents can cause broken bones, strained muscles, twisted/dislocated joints (knees, hips, ankles, shoulders), head injury, and spinal damage. The average fall costs approximately \$5,000 or more, with average medical expenses costing \$2,000. Always stay vigilant when walking or working in areas where these types of hazards exist.



Slip Hazards



Slips are primarily caused by a slippery surface. The likelihood of these incidents is increased by the incorrect footwear, which can cause the forward or rear foot to lose traction, throwing off an employee's center of gravity. Unwanted substances and liquids on walking surfaces can create a hydroplaning situation. Common sources include grease/oil, water, mud, soap, or a freshly cleaned (wet) finish. Other, non-liquid surface causes of slips include dust, construction debris, paper, cardboard, or sawdust. Slick or inappropriate footwear, such as smooth leather soles, worn down rubber soles, or high heels can contribute to slips. The correct footwear for the task and environment, with regular repair, maintenance or replacement, can help prevent slips. Shoes with a high coefficient of friction between the shoe and walking surface also prevent slips. The following are examples of high-risk areas where slips are more likely to occur:

By Floor Type

- Entrances and Exits
- Floor surface changes in elevation or texture
- Ramps and stairways

Due to Maintenance

- Areas recently mopped or cleaned
- Wet surfaces due to the nature of the work being performed
- Areas with leaks or condensation

By Building Location

- Kitchens and food preparation areas
- Restrooms, showers
- Healthcare facilities

Office Slips, Trips, and Falls *continued...*

Trip Hazards

Trips occur when one foot strikes an object and is suddenly stopped. The upper body is then thrown forward causing a fall. Tripping hazards often occur when employees are busy with tasks or activities that take their attention away from surrounding hazards. Large objects are easily recognized as tripping hazards, but small objects are also dangerous because they are often harder to identify. Examples of tripping hazards include the following:



Electrical
Cords

Raised rugs, floors, sidewalk sections

Loose floor boards

Cluttered walkways

Bottom drawers not being closed

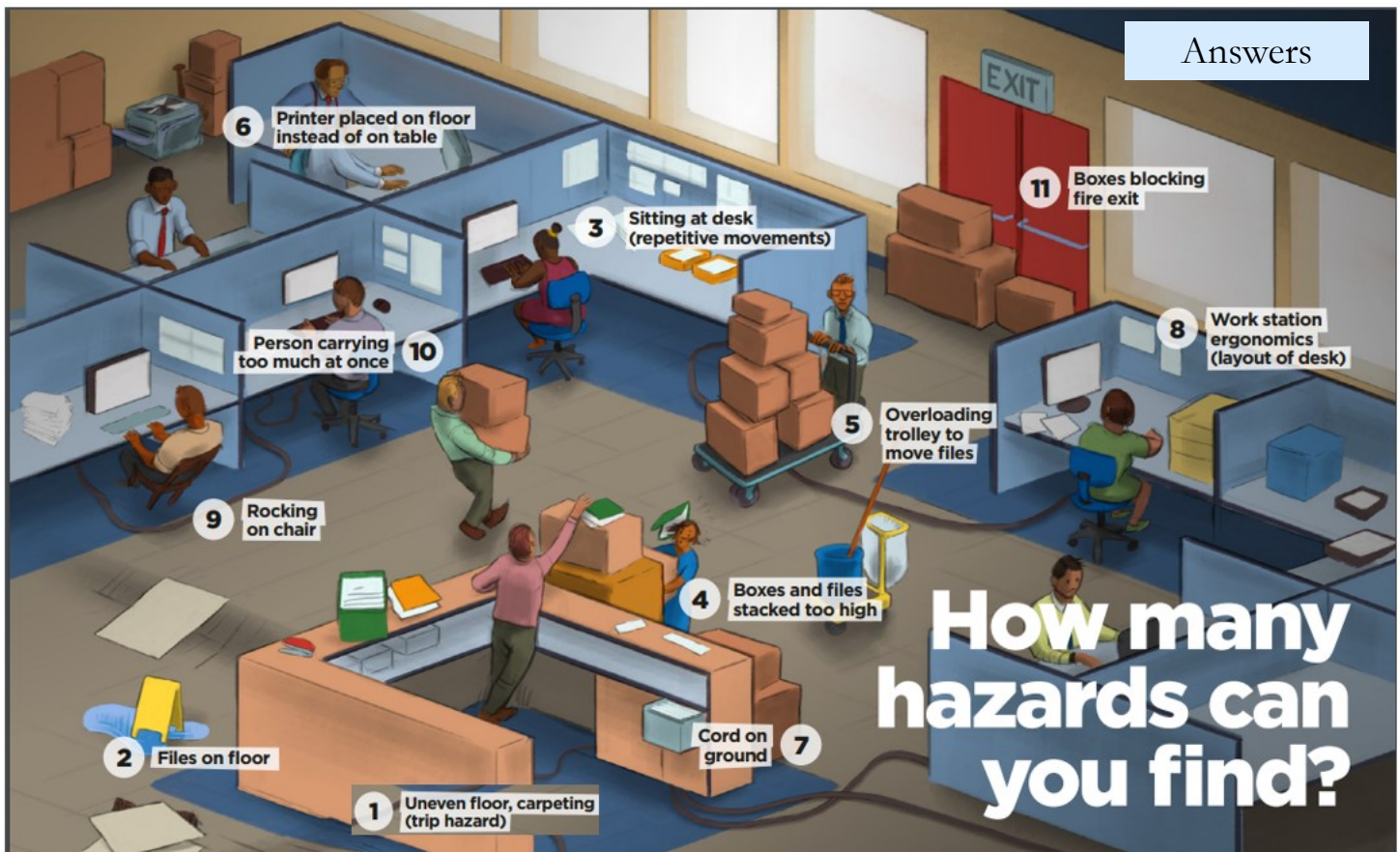
Obstructed view

Uneven walking surfaces

Preventing Slips, Trips and Falls

- ⇒ **Recognize Hazards:** Be alert to spot hazards in advance, keep walking areas and stairways free of clutter, follow proper housekeeping practices and procedures.
- ⇒ **Avoid Hazards:** Do not wear sunglasses indoors and avoid moving from light to dark areas too quickly. Slow down! If you must go through a hazard, slow down, take smaller steps, and avoid sharp turns. Watch Out! Distractions, not watching where you are going, and carrying bulky loads can prevent you from identifying hazards.
- ⇒ **Wear the Right Footwear:** Rubber soles with traction patterns are the best footwear for preventing slips, avoid smooth leather soles and high heels, keep the soles of your shoes clear of debris and oil.
- ⇒ **Control and Repair Hazards:** Alert others if you see a hazard. If necessary, notify supervisors or maintenance personnel for correction. If possible, fix, mark, or section off the hazard to prevent injury to others. Clean up spills immediately.





Stairway Safety

Falls from stairs can be just as dangerous as falls from ladders or other elevated height. The National Safety Council (NSC) reports that over 1 million injuries and 12,000 fatalities occur annually from stairway falls in the United States. They also report stairway accidents are the second leading cause of accidental injury, second only to motor vehicle accidents. If they are not ascended and descended correctly, or properly maintained, stairs can pose serious risks. The good news is that many of these injuries and fatalities can be prevented. When using stairs, follow these practices to avoid injury:



- Turn on lights to improve visibility
- Perform a quick visual inspection of the floor leading to the stairs and the stairs to identify dangerous conditions, such as wet or slippery surfaces
- Always use the handrail when ascending or descending the stairs
- Avoid distractions, such as using a mobile phone
- Do not carry excessive materials that block your view
- Always keep at least one hand free
- Avoid engaging in horseplay or rushing
- Ensure proper footing on each step
- Identify and remove trip hazards, such as boxes, tools, or other items

Building Security = Office Safety



Effective workplace security means following safety procedures when you enter and exit County buildings to limit unauthorized building access and ensure the safety of all employees and visitors by restricting access to only authorized individuals. Every employee plays a part in following and enforcing building and door security protocols.

When Entering a County Facility

As a County employee, you are required to follow certain

security protocols when entering and exiting a County facility. These protocols reduce safety and security risks, such as unauthorized entry by a suspicious person, loss of sensitive County property or information, and potential terrorist or active shooter events.

In addition to the County door security requirements listed to the right,

if you see a suspicious person lingering near an entrance to a County facility, either politely approach them and offer your assistance (if safe to do so) or report them to site security or your Supervisor.

Keep entrance, side, and back doors locked when possible

Maintain control of access badges/keys at all times and immediately report lost or stolen badges/keys

Ensure doors close and latch firmly behind you when you enter

Employees should enter the building using their own badge

Avoid "tailgating." Don't "hold the door" for employees, clients or visitors

If you forget your key or badge, contact your Supervisor and enter through the main building entrance

Don't ask coworkers, custodial, or maintenance staff to let you in side or back doors

Inside County Facilities

Once inside a County facility, additional protocols must be followed to maintain site security. One of the greatest security threats is unauthorized people entering County buildings. Once indoors, stay alert and be vigilant in enforcing rules that keep workers and visitors safe. Some helpful security requirements are shown below.

Wear your ID badge at all times

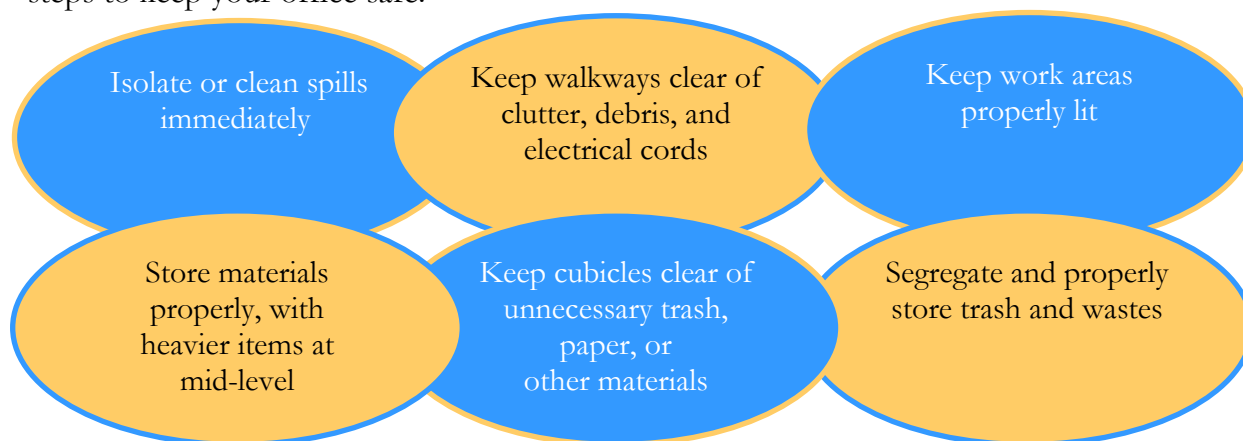
Report unauthorized visitors and unusual behavior to security or your Supervisor

Politely approach and offer assistance to unescorted visitors

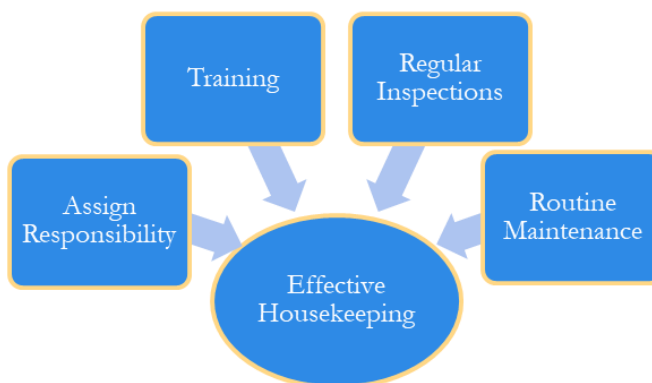
Escort visitors and clients at all times

Housekeeping for Safety

Good housekeeping is an important part of accident and fire prevention, and a simple, effective way to prevent office injuries. Housekeeping doesn't apply just to cleanliness; it includes keeping work areas neat and orderly, maintaining halls and floors free of slip and trip hazards, and removal of waste materials (e.g., paper, cardboard) which can create fire hazards. It includes attention to important details such as the layout of the entire workplace, aisle marking, the adequacy of storage facilities, and facility maintenance. Effective housekeeping is an ongoing challenge and requires continued vigilance to effectively protect office employees. It is every employee's responsibility to help keep the office space a safe place! If you can't address it, report it immediately! The following are simple housekeeping steps to keep your office safe:



In addition to following good housekeeping, electrical safety, and material storage practices, developing a plan to identify and address office hazards can help prevent injuries to employees. These plans can increase worker awareness of hazards in and around their offices. Assigning employee's responsibilities within these plans increases worker accountability to better protect not only themselves, but their coworkers as well. These plans can be simple and straightforward, but in order to be effective, they should include certain key elements, shown to the right.



Available Training in Target Solutions

IMPORTANT TRAINING DATES 2020

In-person training classes have been suspended through September 30, 2020 but there are plenty of safety training classes and the County's mandatory compliance classes available online at Target Solutions! Consider these safety and compliance classes:

General Coronavirus Training:

- Courses - Coronavirus 101 - What You Need to Know (Newest Version)
- Courses - Coronavirus 102 - Preparing Your Household
- Courses - Coronavirus 103 - Managing Stress and Anxiety
- Courses - Coronavirus 104 - Transitioning to a Remote Workforce
- Courses - Coronavirus 105 - Cleaning and Disinfecting Your Workplace
- CCC - COVID-19 Safety Training
- TAILGATE - CCC Emergency Evacuation Procedures during COVID-19

General Training:

- CCC Injury and Illness Prevention Program (IIPP) Training
- CCC Wildfire Smoke Safety for Employees
- CCC Driver Safety Training
- CCC Office Ergonomics Awareness Training
- CCC Emergency Evacuation Procedures - All County
- Anti-Harassment Training for All Employees (every 2 years)
- Cultural Diversity (every 3 years)
- Fire Extinguisher Safety
- Fire Prevention Safety
- Mandated Child Abuse Reporting

Supervisors are recommended to take the classes above and:

- CCC Serious Injury & Illness Reporting
- CCC Wildfire Smoke Safety for Supervisors and Managers
- Anti-Harassment Training for Supervisors and Managers (every 2 years)

Log into the Target Solutions website at www.targetsolutions.com/ccc



TRAINING TIME

...is *all* the time!

Required Trainings

Anti-Harassment for Non-Supervisory Personnel

+ https://app.targetolutions.com/tsapp/dashboard/pl_fb/index.cfm?fuseaction=c_pro_courses.showAvailableCourse&navIDs=1,10&courseid=1151458

+ **Rationale:** https://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/billTextClient.xhtml?bill_id=201720180SB1343

Anti-Harassment for Supervisors and Managers

+ https://app.targetolutions.com/tsapp/dashboard/pl_fb/index.cfm?fuseaction=c_pro_courses.showAvailableCourse&navIDs=1,10&courseid=1151552

+ **Rationale:** https://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/billTextClient.xhtml?bill_id=201720180SB1343

Upcoming Trainings

Implicit Bias Awareness

- Tuesday, January 12, 2021
- Tuesday, January 19, 2021
- Tuesday, January 26, 2021
- Thursday, January 28, 2021

Implicit Bias for Supervisors and Managers

- Thursday, January 14, 2021
- Thursday, January 21, 2021
- Wednesday, January 27, 2021

Training Time Tunes

Antibacterial Girl

+ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=djY9WeflE4&feature=youtu.be>

Teacher's COVID-19 Song

+ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1f7OwFqTnco>

Please Don't Stop the Music—Or the Anti-Harassment Training

Anti-Harassment training completions have been on the rise, totaling 4,130 and placing Contra Costa County halfway to our goal of completing the Anti-Harassment training by the **deadline date of January 1, 2021**. Currently, Health Services is leading in completions of the Anti-Harassment training, which raises awareness about sexual harassment, bullying, discrimination, and retaliation in the workplace. The training is offered in a non-supervisory personnel version and a supervisors and managers version, and it must be completed by every Contra Costa County employee and contracted worker every two years. Contracted workers include, but are not limited to: employees who work for companies that are contracted by Contra Costa County, individuals with whom Contra Costa County holds a contract, temporary employees, and retired annuitants.

If you have not taken the Anti-Harassment training, you can enroll in the training by clicking on the appropriate link for your job position in the left-hand column of this article. You will be redirected to Target Solutions and prompted to log in. After logging in, click on the link in the left-hand column of this article again. The Anti-Harassment training page on Target Solutions will appear and, upon clicking on "Launch Course," the training will begin. As an alternative method for you to access the Anti-Harassment training, your department's Target Solutions Point of Contact will be assigning the training to you, meaning that you can log in to Target Solutions, click on "My Assignments" in the left-hand column of the home page, click on the Anti-Harassment training to start the course, and the training will begin.

The training is self-paced, meaning that your progress will be saved if you choose to complete the training in more than one sitting. If you need to navigate back to the training,

Backseat Boys

+ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=11Yu8zMZeBw&feature=youtu.be>

Training Unit Contacts

Training Assistants

- Ivy Hughes
rminterm@riskm.cccounty.us
- Jovito Angat
jovito.angat@riskm.cccounty.us

Training Manager

Ron Martin
ron.martin@riskm.cccounty.us

log in to Target Solutions and click on “My Assignments” in the left-hand column of the home page. Click on your Anti-Harassment training, and you will be able to continue from your previous stopping point. For Target Solutions-related questions, please contact support at targetsolutions@riskm.cccounty.us. Keep up the good work with the training completions! We are almost there!

Speaking of almost there, are you feeling like the COVID-19 pandemic is dragging on—maybe like the masks are becoming just a little *too* irritating? We understand—and you're not alone. This phenomenon is part of something called “pandemic fatigue.” This fatigue, characterized as a defeated and burned out feeling that contributes to a lack of motivation and productivity¹, can increase the likelihood of workplace accidents². Understandably, the current times have contributed to a unique general tiredness. However, it is critical that we continue to wear our masks and social

distance in the workplace so as to protect ourselves and others. As we continue to navigate these challenging times, some helpful practices in combating pandemic fatigue in the workplace include: looking away from your screen for a few seconds every now and then during Zoom meetings, highlighting and appreciating the positive aspects of life, understanding and embracing the fact that you are giving tasks your best efforts, and practicing kindness.

Another great way to promote self-growth and learning during these unprecedented times is to attend a virtual training! Starting next year, the Implicit Bias trainings will return—as completely restructured, interactive virtual courses! For 2021 Implicit Bias Awareness and Implicit Bias for Supervisors and Managers (IBSM) dates, please see the “Upcoming Trainings” section in the column on the left-hand side of the first page of this article. Additionally, these dates will be displayed on the Target Solutions Bulletin Board, located on the right-hand side of the home screen that appears after logging into Target Solutions.

As a final note, to spread holiday cheer this season, the Training Unit is introducing “Training Time Tunes,” a song/video list dedicated to educating—and entertaining—our workforce! To access these videos, click on the links that are displayed below the titles of the videos. They are located in the left-hand column on the first page of this article in the “Training Time Tunes” section. Until next time, have a safe and happy holiday season!

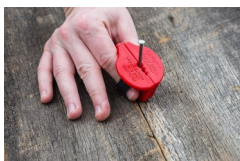
Sources:

¹ Ways to cope with COVID-19 fatigue - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VQGFyl6yaiw&feature=youtu.be>

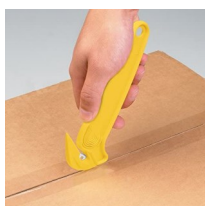
² What Workers and Employers Can Do to Manage Workplace Fatigue during COVID-19 - <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/managing-workplace-fatigue.html>

Safety-Related Holiday Gifts

The Holidays are here! With so many gift options available, now is the perfect time to give the gift of safety to a friend, loved one, or a coworker. Here are some gift ideas with a safety-related theme:

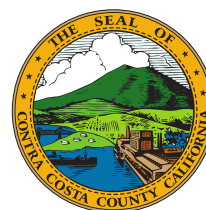


Safety Nailer: No more crushed fingers while nailing! These devices will hold the nail in place and protect your fingers while using a hammer.



Safe Box Cutter: A perfect stocking stuffer to help open all those holiday packages safely!

Self Defense Personal Alarm Keychain: Stay safe when walking alone to your vehicle or taking a late night run with this alarm keychain and flashlight. The 130dB alarm can be heard from hundreds of feet away, alerting others that you need assistance quickly.



RISK MANAGEMENT
SAFETY AND
LOSS CONTROL

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925-335-1400

Safety Newsletter E-mail:
Norman.Wright@riskm.cccounty.us

Dedicated to
preventing
injuries and
illnesses.

**CONTACT
US!**

COVID-19 Safety Gift Ideas

- **Touchless Safety Key:** Let's you avoid touching heavily used surfaces such as doors, credit/debit card pay stations, and elevator buttons



- **Custom Printed Face Coverings:** Say you are fighting the spread of COVID-19 with your own picture or message.



- **Handheld UV Sanitizing Light:** Disinfect surfaces with ease with this portable UV sanitizing light. Portable so you can take it anywhere you go.

