

DAKOTA COUNTY

Safety Manual

**Prevention of Major
Occupational Injuries, Illnesses, and Losses**

**Nebraska Intergovernmental
Risk Management Association**

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Chapter 1

Introduction, Objectives and Goal

A. Introduction

The most important asset Dakota County has is its employees. In order to provide maximum protection for employee safety and health, the officials of Dakota County have adopted the following safety policy. This policy applies to all officials and employees of the county, and applies to the job being performed by each employee at any given time. For example, if a highway maintenance employee is performing administrative functions such as clerical work, the applicable standards found in this manual for clerical work apply. If an official is performing maintenance work on equipment, those applicable standards apply.

County government is continually faced with escalating costs that can have an indirect and direct effect on its efficient operation. In many cases the cost is determined by uncontrollable circumstances.

However, there are costs the county can effectively control – injuries or illnesses that result in Workers' Compensation claims, and claims that result from unsafe acts of employees. By implementing an effective and efficient safety policy through the County Board, each office and department, and including every employee, work-related injuries, illnesses and unsafe work practices and the associated claims can be reduced. The costs associated with claims have a direct impact and effect on the insurance premiums the county pays.

B. Objectives

As stated earlier, the most important asset county government has is you, the employee. One of our main objectives is to reduce and eliminate incidents that result in an injury or illness not only to you, but to any of our employees.

The majority of incidents (more than 90 percent) have been determined to be **preventable**. The majority of **preventable** incidents can be attributed to one of the following causes:

- Ergonomically poor work habits or conditions;
- Failure to be aware of surrounding conditions;
- Failure to report defective equipment and its continued use;
- Failure to use personal protective equipment;
- Improper entry or exit from vehicles or equipment;
- Failure to operate vehicles or equipment defensively;
- Failure to use handrails;
- Improper use of ladders or substituting non-approved objects such as chairs, desks, counter tops;
- Lack of training;

- Failure to follow written policy;
- Lifting or exerting force improperly;
- Improper footwear;
- Poor housekeeping;
- Running up or down stairs or inclines.

The objectives of this manual are to address each of the classifications of incidents and provide preventability measures and techniques that are easily implemented, clearly understood, and cost-effective.

C. Goal

The goal of county officials, department heads, supervisory personnel, the County Safety Committee, and every county employee is **zero incidents**. Working toward that goal will take the full support and cooperation of each level of county government. It involves the implementation of a plan of action addressing the major incidents which are costly to both the injured employee and the county.

Every county employee should understand that insurance premiums are affected by the losses the county incurs and come directly out of the county budget. The money spent on premiums and losses is therefore not available to use for other purposes. In reaching for a **zero incident** goal the possibility exists that additional funding could be made available for such uses.

This manual addresses how you, as an employee, with the assistance and direction of management – officials, department heads and supervisory personnel – can control such incidents and work toward achieving Dakota County's **zero incident** goal. This manual will provide concise and easy to understand guidance you will require to be informed and comply with the safety standards adopted by Dakota County.

Chapter 2

Responsibilities

A. Responsibilities – Management

Every county official and department head has the responsibility to provide a safe and healthy work environment for the employees they supervise. Throughout this manual specific responsibilities are directed toward the department head. However, the responsibility may be delegated to another county employee, but the accountability will rest with the department head.

The term “management” is defined as meaning an official or department head with responsibility for the office or department and having supervisory authority of employees. Management delegates the responsibility for developing and implementing an effective and efficient safety and health program to the County Safety Committee with assistance from all officials and department heads.

The Safety Committee shall be established in accordance with Neb. Rev. Stat. 48-433 to 48-447, as amended, and the Nebraska Department of Labor Workplace Safety Consultation Program regulations, Title 230, Chapter 7. The Safety Committee serves primarily in an advisory capacity; management retains full authority and accountability for this policy.

B. Responsibilities – Employees

It is the responsibility of every county employee to comply with the safety and health guidelines in this manual and written or oral directives that may be provided prior to beginning a job or while on the job.

You are encouraged to actively participate in the county safety and health program by:

- Following the safety and health guidelines of this manual;
- Complying with directions of supervisory personnel;
- Attending and actively participating in training sessions;
- Offering safety and health suggestions;
- Reporting “near hits,” new hazards and unsafe acts;
- Reporting all personal injuries and damage to equipment, vehicles or county property;
- Reporting unsafe equipment, vehicles or machinery.

The life you save or the injury you prevent may be your own.

C. County Safety Committee

The primary responsibilities and functions of the County Safety Committee are as follows:

- Implement the written injury prevention program developed by management, or develop its own written injury prevention program for approval by management;

- Ensure the written program is a clear, concise set of safety and health guidelines that address the known occupational hazards developed from a Job Safety Analysis. This program is to be followed by all county employees;
- Continue expanding this program by developing a workplace injury prevention program and updating the program on a continuing basis;
- Assist in implementing and updating Job Safety Analysis of known hazards;
- Assist in developing the Emergency Plan and conducting annual drills;
- Investigate each incident which has or could have caused an occupational injury, injuries occurring in or on county property, damage to county property, damage to personal property by a county operation, or liability to the county;
- Make written suggestions, based on the findings of the investigation, to the proper county authority to eliminate the recurrence of such an event or a reduction of the exposure;
- Conduct semiannual safety and health audits of all county facilities and submit written reports of the findings to the responsible official or department head with suggestions for correcting any deficiencies;
- Assist management in setting up and conducting safety and health training programs;
- Use outside safety and health resources whenever possible, whenever needed and available;
- Maintain training records;
- Assist each office or department in developing regular safety meetings in addition to those meetings that may be otherwise required by law (Refer to Training in Chapter 3);
- Designate a subcommittee responsible for reviewing and updating this safety manual;
- Address employee concerns in the area of safety and health, and respond in writing to all concerns submitted;
- Conduct a performance evaluation of the committee annually to evaluate its effectiveness and the efficiency of the program;
- Provide management with written reports on all its activities and with suggestions for improvement in any area found deficient; and,
- Conduct a minimum of four committee meetings annually.

D. Non-Compliance

A county employee found in non-compliance with one or more of the requirements of this safety manual may be subject to appropriate disciplinary action as follows:

- **First Level** – Verbal reprimand, documented with suggestions to prevent reoccurrence.
- **Second Level** – Written reprimand, documented with suggestions for improvement, including how the supervisor may provide assistance to the offending employee. This type of reprimand could impose up to three (3) days off without pay.
- **Third Level** – Formal Corrective Action Meeting. A Job Performance report will be made a part of this meeting and corrective action, including time off without pay or termination, will be part of the conclusion of the meeting.

NOTE: This three-tier approach to disciplinary action should not conflict with any similar disciplinary action addressed in the county's Personnel Manual.

Chapter 3

Training

A. Training Program

You will not be expected to perform a job until you are properly trained and qualified by management.

In a majority of instances your prior job duties have qualified you or you have been trained on the job or otherwise informed of the duties to be performed. You will not be asked to use any unsafe equipment. Defective equipment, including tools, will be repaired or replaced prior to use.

The training program developed by the County Safety Committee, with assistance from management and employees, while addressing existing safety standards, is aimed in the direction of doing what is right the first time. This could be termed "ethical safety" rather than regulatory safety.

At the center of ethical safety Dakota County is attempting to provide a positive view of what is right and what is good. In the development of our training program, it is our intent to make an approach to safety that is worth pursuing in order to reach our goal of **zero incidents**.

It is our desire that each employee understands the meaning of ethical safety and the benefit for himself or herself, for his or her co-workers, and for the county as a whole.

The on-going safety training program developed by the County Safety Committee should encourage each employee to become an active participant, not only during training sessions, but also while on the job.

Chapter 4

Drug and Alcohol Use

A. Prohibited on the Job

Dakota County is a Drug Free Workplace and as such, alcoholic beverages and other non-prescription, mind-altering substances are prohibited on county property or while performing county functions. Dakota County may require applicants, after being offered employment, to take a drug and/or alcohol test. Employees, at any time, may be subject to reasonable suspicion drug and alcohol testing. Additionally, an employee:

- Will not manufacture, distribute, dispense, possess or use controlled substances or alcohol during working hours or on county property.
- Will not report to work when under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs.
- Will inform their department head or supervisor within five days of a conviction for any violation of federal or state criminal drug statutes if the violation occurred on county premises.
- Who holds a Commercial Driver's License will comply with the drug and alcohol requirements of the Department of Transportation and Nebraska Department of Motor Vehicles regulations.
- Will not, during working hours, consume any mind-altering substance, except as prescribed by a physician, providing it does not inhibit the ability to safely perform the essential functions of his or her job.

B. Prescription Medications

When an employee receives a prescription from a licensed practitioner for any medication which contains a cautionary warning that it may adversely affect the performance of his or her job, including the potential to cause drowsiness, affect decision-making abilities, or impair ability to operate equipment or machinery, the employee will inform his or her supervisory authority. A decision will then be made on what is in the best interest of the employee and the county regarding work activities.

NOTE: Nothing in this chapter shall conflict with any drug or alcohol use policy found in the county's Personnel Manual. If there is a conflict between the two, the Personnel Manual will govern.

Chapter 5

Reports and Investigation

A. Incident Statements and Reports

In any incident involving county personnel or county equipment, an employee shall not make any statement regarding the incident, with the exception being to the following: investigating law enforcement; County Attorney; county management; NIRMA.

If you are contacted by any other party regarding the incident, including news media, refer them to the County Attorney or other designated spokesperson. It is also advisable for management, prior to making any statement to the news media or others, to consult with the County Attorney.

B. Work-Related Injury or Illness

Every injury or illness occurring on the job to a county employee, regardless of how minor, must be reported to management and the county is responsible for reporting it to NIRMA.

C. Injury, Fatality or Property Damage

Every incident involving a personal injury, fatality, or property damage to a member of the public occurring on county property or roads and any accident involving a county vehicle or equipment must be reported to management and the county is responsible for reporting it to NIRMA.

D. "Near Hit" or Other Hazardous Conditions or Acts

Anyone witnessing a "near hit" incident or having knowledge of a hazardous condition or unsafe act that could result in an injury or property damage should provide management with a written report of the circumstance of the situation. "Near hits," oftentimes referred to as "near misses," are situations where an injury or damage to property did not result from the incident or situation, but this was purely due to chance or luck. "Near hits" should not be ignored or forgotten. When a hazardous condition is discovered it should be addressed for reduction or elimination through administrative, engineering or Personal Protective Equipment methods. When an unsafe act is observed, the employee committing the act must be advised of such either by a co-worker or management. Unsafe acts not only place the employee in harms way, but also endanger co-workers. A "Near hit" should be considered a free lesson in risk management and error prevention and should be utilized as such.

E. Investigation by Management and County Safety Committee

All incidents mentioned above are to be reported by management to the County Safety Committee and are to be investigated by both management and the County Safety Committee. The goal of the investigation is to determine how to prevent a reoccurrence of a similar incident. An incident indicates a failure in the safety system and must be addressed. This failure could be, but is not limited to:

- § Failure by an employee or non-employee to follow safety procedures;
- § Lack of or inadequate written procedures;
- § Lack of or inadequate training;
- § Equipment failure.

Chapter 6

Emergency Plans

A. Emergency Plans

Management has the responsibility to develop and implement written emergency plans addressing the major known emergencies that could arise in the workplace. This plan will provide evacuation procedures, response to a medical emergency, the handling of various forms of violence, (i.e., bomb threats, on-site verbal or non-verbal threats, physical attacks by individuals or weapons), hazardous materials spills or exposures, security, and providing for the continuity of business in the event of a disaster. Generally, the following emergencies are addressed:

- § Fire
- § Medical Emergency
- § Weather - Tornado
- § Violence in the Workplace
- § Hazardous Materials Spills or Exposures
- § Domestic Violence
- § Terrorism

Each office has a written emergency plan addressing the above.

B. Fire

All employees will be offered training in the use of a fire extinguisher within the first year of employment and thereafter annual refresher courses. The County Safety Committee will arrange for this training.

Should you discover a fire, loudly announce to others its location, if known. If trained in the use of a fire extinguisher, make a decision to fight or flee. Remember, there is nothing more important at the site of the fire than your life or the lives of others.

1. Fighting a Fire

- a. Use the "R-A-C-E" procedure:
 - **Rescue** – Immediately stop what you are doing and remove anyone in immediate danger from the fire to a safe area.
 - **Activate** – Activate the nearest fire alarm pull station (if applicable), call 911 to report the location and current extent of the fire and notify staff.
 - **Contain** – Close all doors and windows that you can safely reach to contain the fire. Close doors behind you as you evacuate.
 - **Extinguish** – attempt to extinguish the fire if it is safe to do so. Retrieve the nearest extinguisher and use the "P-A-S-S" procedure:
- b. With a fire extinguisher use the "P-A-S-S" procedure:
 - **Pull** the pin;

- Aim the nozzle at the base of the fire;
- Squeeze the handle;
- Sweep the nozzle from side to side.

2. Fleeing from a Fire

- a. Announce loudly there is a fire and, if known, its location;
- b. Tell others in the immediate area to evacuate and activate the emergency notification process to alert all others on the premises to the danger;
- c. Evacuate using the nearest exterior exit; – do not go back for personal possessions or other county property;
- d. Call the emergency number **after** you have evacuated;
- e. Go to your department's pre-assigned assembly point, which will be a minimum of 500 feet from the fire and out of harms way.

C. Medical Emergency

Employees working in locations where medical services or a hospital or clinic are not available within four (4) minutes following a medical emergency will be offered First Aid and Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) training. This training is on a voluntary basis at the expense of the county.

If you provide emergency first aid or CPR, or other emergency care at the scene of an accident or other emergency gratuitously, neither you nor the county can be held liable for any civil damages. Neb. Rev. Stat. 25-21,186, known as the Good Samaritan Law, addresses liability in such cases.

Response to a Medical Emergency:

If you are present or are an early arrival at the scene of a serious accident, the following is suggested:

1. Remain calm and encourage others to do the same.
2. If a doctor, nurse or other person trained in first aid is present, offer your assistance.
3. If there is no qualified medical personnel or person trained in first aid, obtain consent and call for aid and provide what assistance you can until trained help arrives.

Generally, the following steps should be followed:

1. Do not move a victim unless absolutely necessary.
 - a. If blood or other body fluids containing blood are present, use personal protective equipment if available.
2. Call or delegate someone to call 911 or the local emergency number.
3. Check for responsiveness and normal breathing
 - a. If the victim is unresponsive and not breathing, perform CPR
 - 1) Use a one-way breathing device if available.
4. Stop serious bleeding by applying pressure to the affected area.
5. Treat for shock if needed
5. Treat for poisoning, if indicated.
7. If conscious, reassure the victim that aid is on the way.
 - a. Never offer a diagnosis to the victim.

- 1) Do not tell a victim or others of a specific type of injury (a broken arm, internal injuries, etc.), this judgment should be made by a qualified medical professional.
- b. If possible, do not allow onlookers to comment on the condition of the victim as they may cause further emotional trauma.
8. Make the victim is as comfortable as possible while waiting for aid.
9. Stay at the scene until emergency personnel arrive and provide any requested assistance.
10. Discuss the accident or injuries only with responding and/or investigating law enforcement officials or other qualified authority. Give all factual information that relates to the accident.

When you call for emergency aid or when you send someone to call for aid, remember to provide as accurate a location as possible: road or highway number and the approximate distance and direction from a specific location; how many persons are injured; types of injuries; types of dangers, etc.

Know the emergency number for our area, which in most instances will be "911." If you do not know the emergency number for a particular location, dial "0" and tell the operator that you are making an emergency call. The operator should connect you with the proper authority. (**NOTE:** Depending on our location and the telephone system from which you are placing the call, you may need to dial "9" first to access an outbound line.)

D. First Aid Kits

A first aid kit capable of meeting an emergency situation equal to the total number of employees either in each office, shop or on each floor shall be located in a visible and easily accessible location. The location of the first aid kit will be made known to all employees.

E. Weather

Tornado: Being located in Tornado Alley, it is not unusual for our area to experience exposure to such storms. Employee safety is of primary importance, so follow these directions:

Inside Buildings

- § When tornado sirens sound or an announcement is issued by another qualified source, take shelter in accordance with the county's emergency plan.
- § Do not make phone calls as this could overload the phone system and cause a heightened dangerous condition.
- § Remain in the shelter until you are advised to leave by the official in charge.

In the Field

- § Leave your vehicle or equipment immediately.
- § Take shelter in a strong and stable structure, if available.
- § If no shelter is available find a low depression, such as a ditch, and lie flat, face down with your arms covering your head.
- § It is **not** recommended you take shelter under a viaduct or bridge.

Snowstorm Conditions: If you become stranded during a snowstorm, do not leave your vehicle.

Turn your emergency flashers on and, if you have a cell phone or other communications equipment, make contact with a base station or the emergency center and tell them your (approximate) location. Only run your vehicle motor for five (5) minutes every 15 minutes. Make sure the exhaust system is not blocked by snow. Allow fresh air into your vehicle by slightly opening a window.

F. Bloodborne Pathogens

Bloodborne pathogens are microorganisms that are present in human blood and can cause disease to humans. It is best to assume that any body fluids from an injured person contain such microorganisms and that protection, such as latex or hypo-allergic gloves and one-way breathing devices, is used prior to exposure. Any employee exposed to the body fluids of a person should advise their supervisor as soon as possible and seek medical attention.

Any employee who is stuck by a needle or other type of sharp object or whose eyes, nose, mouth or broken skin comes in contact with blood should:

- § Immediately flush the exposed area with water and clean any wound with soap and water or a skin disinfectant if available;
- § Seek medical attention; and,
- § Report the incident to the department head or supervisor immediately.

The following county employees are deemed in high-risk situations for such an exposure and will be provided the opportunity to participate in the Hepatitis B vaccination program prior to an exposure:

- § Law enforcement and staff: excluding those not in contact with offenders;
- § Correctional personnel and staff: excluding those not in contact with offenders; and,
- § Custodians: excluding those not in contact with debris or trash.

If an employee declines to participate in the program, the employee will be requested to sign a Declination of Hepatitis B Vaccination. At a later date, if the employee decides to participate, he or she need only to advise his or her department head.

All other employees, following a possible exposure, are to inform their department head or supervisor, who will direct them to a medical practitioner for an evaluation and vaccination.

G. Violence in the Workplace

Violence in the workplace, including sexual harassment, will not be tolerated. Each department head will conduct annual reviews with their employees, addressing how incidents of this nature are to be handled when such conduct occurs, whether by a member of the public, a co-worker, or by individuals doing business with the county. The County Safety Committee will make arrangements for regular training in this area.

Workplace violence is considered as the threat of violence against a county worker. It can occur at the workplace or off-site and can range from verbal abuse and threats to physical assaults and homicide.

Dakota County takes a position of **zero tolerance** in the area of workplace violence, be it either against or by a county employee. The complete policy can be found in our Personnel Manual.

H. Terrorism.

Each office and department has a written plan addressing bomb and other types of terroristic threats. Follow your written plan procedures.

Chapter 7

General Safety

This chapter will touch briefly on the wide array of general safety issues that Dakota County is faced with and the suggested means of addressing those issues. Later chapters in this manual will address in greater detail many of these issues.

A. Be Observant of Surrounding Conditions

Whether in an office environment, in a shop or in the field, employees should take note of and be aware of existing conditions and use proper safety techniques.

1. Watch for objects that could cause you to lose your footing.
2. Use caution on wet or icy surfaces. Clean up spills.
3. If you see some debris or trash take the time to pick it up and dispose of it.
4. Inspect your work area for hazards prior to beginning the job.
5. Use handrails when ascending or descending stairways.
6. Don't put your hands or feet into an area that you cannot see into.
7. Those operating chainsaws should wear protective chaps.
8. Use your lap and shoulder belts when operating a county vehicle.

B. Use Personal Protective Equipment

The failure of employees to use Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) is a major factor in the frequency and severity of work-related injuries. Employees who could be exposed to a situation which might cause injury will be provided the necessary and appropriate PPE. Chapter 10 addresses the use of PPE in greater detail.

C. Poor Housekeeping

Poor housekeeping can result in a slip, trip or fall injury. Each employee is responsible for maintaining a clean work area. Housekeeping is addressed in greater detail in Chapters 8 and 9.

D. Lifting or Exerting Force

Improper lifting or the exertion of unnecessary force can eventually, if not immediately, lead to injury and employees will be trained in proper lifting techniques.

Dakota County has a 50-pound load limit. Moving any load that exceeds 50 pounds requires the use of a second employee or other load lifting device.

Lifting is addressed in greater detail in Chapters 8 and 9.

E. Use of Ladders Versus Use of Non-Approved Objects

The improper use or failure to use an approved ladder or step stool has resulted in serious injuries to employees. Chairs, boxes, counter tops and desk tops are not to be used in place of an appropriate ladder or step stool. Ladder safety is addressed in greater detail in Chapter 12.

F. Report Defective Equipment and Safety Hazards

The routine inspection of county property, including but not limited to vehicles, equipment, machinery, and tools and associated power cords, is the responsibility of the user or operator. Defective property poses a hazard to the user and must be reported to management and will be removed from service to be repaired or replaced.

If you as a Dakota County employee become aware of a hazard that should be addressed or feel a specific type of safety training should be provided, contact a member of the County Safety Committee.

G. Work Habits

One of the leading causes of musculoskeletal disorders (MSD), such as carpal tunnel syndrome, is poor work habits, such as improper body, arm and hand posture. Another cause of MSDs is cumulative trauma where an employee does the same repetitive motion for an extended period of time. These types of injuries can be reduced with proper training, workstation analysis, and ergonomical study of the environment a person works in. Work-related injuries associated with MSDs will be addressed with the same concern as any other work-related injury.

Chapter 8

Office Safety

A. General

Hazards in an office environment are different from what may be found on a road building project. However, the hazards in offices can have the same serious consequences: an employee or member of the public suffering a serious injury. When an office hazard exists it must be eliminated. If it cannot be eliminated then consideration must be given to engineering or administrative controls to reduce the hazard.

County government is subject to various safety and health regulations and standards, including: National Fire Protection Association (NFPA); American National Standards Institute (ANSI); and National Electric Safety Code (NESC) and Uniform Building Code (UBC).

Department heads are responsible for providing a safe and healthy work environment. In order to achieve this the following will assist in attaining a **zero incident** goal:

- § Conduct routine safety and health audits of the workplace.
- § Hold regular safety meetings to discuss safety and health issues.
- § Develop and implement written security procedures addressing those issues pertinent to your office, in addition to the Master Emergency Plan.

Also, employees shall comply with the following:

- § Walk, do not run.
- § When going down or up stairs, use the handrail.
- § Do not carry loads weighing in excess of 50 pounds; get a co-worker to assist or a lifting-transporting device (cart).
- § Spills must be cleaned up immediately.
- § Desk and file drawers must be closed immediately after use.
- § Any injury must be reported immediately to the department head.
- § No materials are to be placed or stored in common walkways (aisles).
- § Materials stored on top of file cabinets or shelves should be stable and not within 18 inches of a sprinkler head or light fixture.
- § Large, heavy, or bulky materials are to be stored on the lower shelves.
- § Infrequently used lighter materials are to be stored on the top shelves.
- § Materials in file cabinet's drawers are to be evenly distributed.
- § When placing or retrieving materials at shoulder height or higher, use a ladder or step stool.
- § Only approved step stools or Type II (commercial) or Type I (industrial) ladders should be used.
- § When approaching blind corners use caution.
- § Be attentive to footing, especially in inclement weather. This also applies when you enter a building as floors may be slippery.

- § Footwear that gives full side, back and front support provides the best protection against ankle or toe injuries; Neoprene soles offer the best protection against slipping.
- § Athletic shoes and open-toed shoes may be permitted, but only in an office environment.
- § When mixing chemicals, use a face shield or, at a minimum, safety goggles or glasses with side shields.

B. Ergonomics

“Ergonomic” programs aim to reduce musculoskeletal disorders (MSD), often caused by repetitive motion. This is one of the largest occupational safety and health problems in all employee work environments and classifications.

1. Work Areas

Work areas should be based on body dimensions using the following principles:

- § Head height: allow for tallest worker and natural posture.
- § Elbow height: adjust normal work surface to just below elbow height.
- § Arm reach: allow for shortest co-worker when reaching up or out; allow for tallest worker when reaching down.
- § Leg length: allow for long legs; provide chair adjustment or footrests for shorter legs.
- § Body bulk: allow for largest sizes; remember to consider varying girth and clothing bulk.

The most favorable working height for handwork, while standing, is 2 to 4 inches below elbow level. On average, working heights of 35 to 39 inches are most convenient, depending on the height of the individual involved. These heights do not apply to computer workstations.

You should also allow for the nature of the work:

- For delicate work it is desirable to support the elbow.
- For standing work, if it involves much effort and makes use of the upper part of the body, such as mailing/file handling, the working surface should be lowered to 6 to 16 inches below elbow height.

Glare from the reflection on your video display terminal (VDT) screen makes it difficult to see the screen clearly. Glare can be caused by sunlight on your screen or by inside light, such as overhead and task lamps. Simple lighting adjustments can help minimize and reduce eyestrain headaches caused by glare.

- Position the screen so it is at right angle to the window producing the glare.
- Close shades, curtains or blinds, if necessary, as light changes during the day.
- Tilt the VDT screen down slightly to avoid overhead light from producing glare.
- Sit with ceiling lights at sides rather than directly overhead.
- If you use a task lamp, position it to aim the light at your document instead of your screen.
- To help improve your viewing comfort, you may also need to adjust your VDT contrast and brightness modes.
- Periodically clean your screen to maximize clarity. Font characters on the screen should be clear and stable.

- Consider attaching a glare shield to the VDT screen if you are unable to eliminate the glare by other means.

Proper VDT use, including proper posture and workstation adjustments with careful attention to muscle and eye fatigue, should help prevent musculoskeletal and visual problems.

2. Adjusting Your Chair and Workstation

- Adjust lumbar (lower back) support by moving the backrest up or down to match the inward curve of your spine.
- Adjust the tilt of the backrest and/or seat to keep your body supported in an upright position.
- Adjust the seat height for adequate leg clearance under the workstation and keep the keyboard at approximately elbow level.
- Adjust your monitor so the top of the screen is at or just below eye level and has a viewing distance of between 18 and 24 inches.
- Use a document holder that places the documents at the same height as the monitor.

3. Proper Body Posture

- Keep your head in line with your shoulders and hips.
- Keep elbows close to your body.
- Keep wrists in a neutral position; bent no more than 10 degrees up or down.
- A keyboard and padded wrist rest can be used to support the wrists in a neutral position.
- Keep your knees at the same level as your hips or slightly higher.
- Keep feet flat on the floor or supported by a footrest.
- Keep fingers in a relaxed position when working.
- Reassess your workstation periodically.

C. File Cabinets

- Drawers are to be closed except when in immediate use.
- Always load from the bottom up to prevent cabinets from tipping over; never have more than one drawer of the same file cabinet open at a time.
- Avoid overloading top drawers.
- Close drawers gently using the drawer handles to prevent pinching fingers.
- If a drawer is solidly stuck, contact those responsible for equipment maintenance.

D. Material and Office Supply Storage

- Material and office supplies must be stored in appropriate areas set aside for this purpose.
- Only items which can be solidly stacked on top of cabinets are permitted.
- Store heavy or breakable items on lower shelves.
- Store frequently used items on the middle shelves and in front.

Do not:

- Overload cabinets or shelves.
- Store materials on top of modular furniture overheads or cabinets.

- Store materials above the level of your shoulder height without using a ladder or step stool.
- Place heavy objects on top of file cabinets greater than (five) 5 feet tall.
- Use storage boxes (cardboard boxes) as room dividers.
- Use walkways, hallways, stairwells, and landings for storage. Walkways and hallways should be maintained free of all obstructions or impediments for use in case of an emergency.

NOTE: If materials (office supplies or records) have to be stored in cardboard boxes, they should be stacked or racked in a manner designed to prevent them from tipping, falling, collapsing, rolling, or spreading.

E. Cutting and Attaching Equipment

- Paper cutters will be equipped with safety bars. The blade spring tension is to be adjusted so the blade will not fall on its own weight. The blade will be stored in the down and locked in a closed position when not in use.
- Do not attempt to forcefully discharge jammed staplers with the paper rest open.
- Razor blades, E-XACTO® blades and other pointed objects are to be boxed and stored separately. Never reach blindly for such items.

F. Office Furniture and Equipment

- All legs of a chair are to rest on the floor. Do not tilt back to the extent that a chair leg comes off the floor.
- Check chairs monthly for loose screws, defective welds and broken springs.
- A chair should comfortably support your lower back, should not brush against your inner calves, and should allow your feet to rest on the floor. If your chair is not adjustable, a pillow behind your back and/or a riser under your feet can help provide additional support – **Caution:** this could also become a tripping hazard.
- Do not stand on chairs, desks, counter tops, cartons, trash receptacles or bookcases.
- Stepladders, properly extended, or approved lockable stands will be used for extending one's reach.
- Desk drawers must not be left in an open position.
- Glass desktops or counter tops are to be free from cracks, sharp edges or corners, and chips or broken edges.
- Defective, broken, splintered or cracked surfaces of any office furniture should be reported to building maintenance personnel or other proper authority for immediate repair.
- If it becomes necessary for an employee to move office furniture or equipment, when the weight or size of the items exceeds your physical capabilities, additional personnel are to be used.

Securing Furniture and Equipment

In order to be prepared for emergencies, certain office furniture and equipment should be secured to walls or floors.

- File cabinets/storage cabinets five (5) feet high and taller are to be placed against permanent walls and secured to the wall. File cabinets/storage cabinets, shorter than five (5) feet need not be secured to walls or floors.
- If wall space is not available, file/storage cabinets over five (5) feet high but less than six (6) feet

- may be placed in open areas, placed back-to-back and secured to each other, or the floor.
- File cabinets/storage cabinets (6) feet or taller are to be placed against permanent walls and secured to the wall.
- If wall space is not available, file/storage cabinets six (6) feet or taller may be placed in open areas, provided they are placed back-to-back and secured to each other and the floor.

G. Electrical Equipment and Cords

Office work areas are subject to the National Electric Safety Codes (NESC) in the State of Nebraska. The following represents some of the pertinent electrical safety standards:

- Electrical power cords for computers, printers, or other devices will not be placed on the floor unprotected or where they may create a tripping hazard. Such cords, if placed in areas where you walk, will be covered with a protective strip to prevent tripping.
- Only UL approved electrical cords will be used.
- Only qualified employees will repair defective electrical cords.
- All equipment should be grounded; ground adapters are not permitted.
- Electrical extension cords are permitted. However, they are not to be used as a long-term substitute for fixed wiring.
- New electrical outlets should be installed to eliminate the need to have an excess of appliances on a single circuit.
- Portable heaters are discouraged. If used, these heaters are to be equipped with an automatic shutoff and comply with other county policies.

Machine and General Office

- Office machines will be turned off and unplugged prior to being serviced or when adjustments are made to a mechanical or electrical enclosed portion. Only qualified personnel will service or make adjustments to office machines.
- Report to your supervisor electrical hazards, such as frayed or bare wires, overloaded outlets, or improperly grounded wires. Provide a report to those responsible for repair of this type of equipment.
- Wear gloves when using toner or other chemicals used in office machines.
- Turn equipment off prior to adding any flammable liquids.
- Document cover on photocopiers should be down during copying to avoid blinding.
- Rings, bracelets, neckties, long strands of hair, and other loose personal items could be hazardous around exposed moving parts of office equipment.

H. Space Requirements

The minimum space requirements for aisles and hallways are based on the Nebraska State Fire Marshal, the Life Safety Code of the NFPA, and the construction standards contained in the UBC.

It is required there be unobstructed walking space between and around desks, chairs, bookcases, file cabinets, credenzas, other general office furniture or equipment, and wall partitions. The wall partitions may be portable or permanent.