



# FAST FACTS

Office of Compliance - -  
Advancing workplace rights, safety, health, and accessibility in the Legislative Branch

## ***Safe Office Checklist: Is Your Office a Safe Place?***

May 2016

The Congressional Accountability Act of 1995 established an obligation for your employer to provide each Legislative Branch employee a safe and healthful place to work. The Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970 (OSH Act) established similar requirements for employers in the private sector and the Federal executive branch of government. A general obligation [general duty] has been established for employing offices to furnish to each employee a workplace free of recognized hazards that are likely to cause death or serious physical harm and to comply with the standards established by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration under the OSH Act.

Each worker needs to stay alert to potential office safety and health hazards and bring them to the attention of a supervisor or manager to have them properly addressed. The following checklist will assist office workers, managers and other employees to ensure a safer workplace. Use this checklist to see if your office area is in compliance.

✓Review your office emergency action plan or evacuation plan to know where to go if a building evacuation or a shelter-in-place emergency alarm is sounded in your building. If you have assigned duties under your office plan, know what they are and how to perform them. Make sure that emergency telephone numbers are available.

✓Ensure that office annunciators are working properly and kept fully charged for emergency use. Reset them after each use.

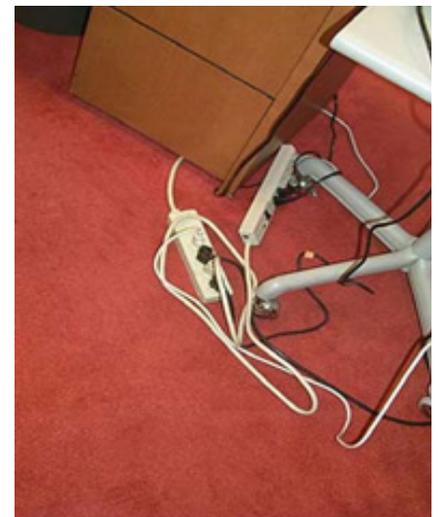


Appliance plug missing ground prong

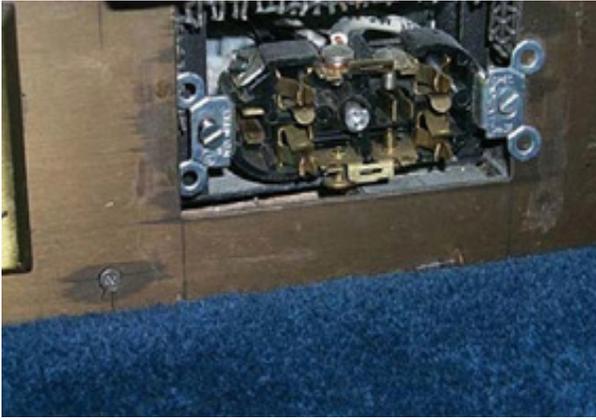
✓Make sure exit signs are working can be seen in all conditions, and that work areas have emergency lighting where necessary. Do not block exit doors. Ensure that ceiling tiles are intact and that all holes and wall penetrations are sealed.

✓Check electrical wires for your desk equipment as well as other office equipment to ensure that extension cords are not being used as permanent wiring connections. Each power strip or surge protector must be plugged directly into a floor or wall outlet. Make sure each three-prong has its ground prong.

✓Check all electrical outlets and power plugs to ensure that they are not damaged and that the electrical wires are kept within the box. Check the wiring areas in modular furniture to make sure that all covers are in place that keep the electrical contacts properly covered. Ensure that a Nationally Recognized Testing Laboratory approves all electrical equipment and appliances. Ensure that lighting is adequate to allow employees to see their work.



Power strips plugged in series (Daisy chain)



Broken wall-outlet was being used to power computer workstation

✓Bathroom outlets near the sink and in other wet floor and counter areas must have ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCI) protection. Test these GFCI's periodically in order to ensure that they trip properly to prevent electrical shock hazards. Test the GFCI's by pressing the test button and then after it trips, push the reset button on the GFCI so that electrical service is restored.

✓Electrical panel boards with circuit breakers are to be kept closed and secured. The area in front of all electrical panels must be clear from obstructions so that the door can be fully opened and the electrician can access the panel quickly to turn off the power during an emergency.

✓Portable space heaters must be plugged directly into a floor or wall outlet. Make sure that there are no combustible materials placed near the heater, and that the heater has a tip over switch so that it will automatically shutdown if it is knocked over on its face to prevent a fire from occurring.

✓Portable fans must be equipped with a fan blade guard with openings of a half inch in diameter or less.

✓Ensure paper trimmers and cutters have a finger guard in front of the blade arm cutting area to prevent the fingers from getting under the blade.

✓Check to make sure that power cords, wires and phone cables do not run across or in a walkway or exit route pathway to prevent a tripping hazard or use a cord cover.

✓Ensure that carpet and rugs are secured and in good condition to prevent slipping and tripping. Make sure any materials spilling on the floor that could create a slip or trip hazard are promptly cleaned up.

✓Make sure that when file cabinet drawers are in use that they do not block a walkway and are not left unattended. Close drawers completely after use. Make sure when loading file cabinets that heavy items are placed on the bottom to keep the cabinet stable when in use.



Poorly guarded fan

✓Make sure that materials stored overhead are kept stored in a secured manner. Any storage shelving used to store materials or equipment must be secured to the wall or other means to prevent it and its stored contents from falling over onto a person. Materials should be stored 18" minimum away from sprinkler heads.



Blocked exit

For complete information on workplace safety and your rights under the Congressional Accountability Act, visit our website [www.compliance.gov](http://www.compliance.gov), or contact us at 202-724-9250. And remember to follow us on Twitter: @LegBranch\_OOC.