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1. OBJECTIVE

This procedure provides general precautions for office safety in the Department of Medicine.

2. SCOPE

This SOP is applicable to all staff and students working in the Department of Medicine Research Laboratories at MD1, MD6 and NUH.

3. RESPONSIBILITY

3.1 PIs and supervisors must ensure the following:

- The risk management process is incorporated in safety and health regulations, directives and operational plans to minimize accident risk and that SOPs are developed for all operations entailing risk of death, serious injury, occupational illness or property loss.
- Promptly evaluate and carry out steps as required to correct the hazards reported by employees, or identified through accident investigation.


3.2 All staff and students will comply with safety and health rules, regulations, and standards, and report any unsafe and unhealthy working conditions and accidents to their immediate supervisor.

4. GENERAL PRECAUTIONS

4.1 Housekeeping Practices

Poor housekeeping is a major contributor to occupational injuries and illness. By keeping the office floor both neat and clean, you can eliminate most slipping, tripping, and falling hazards. Other good housekeeping practices include the following:

- Ensure that office lighting is adequate. Replace faulty light bulbs and have additional lighting installed, as necessary.
- Ensure that electrical cords and phone cords do not cross walkways or otherwise pose a tripping hazard. If you cannot move a cord, have a new outlet installed or secure the cord to the floor with cord covering strips.
- Report or repair tripping hazards such as defective tiles or boards immediately.
- Clean spills and pick up fallen debris immediately. Even simple items such as a loose pencil could cause a serious falling injury.
- Keep office equipment, facilities, and machines in good, clean condition, leaving 1.2m distance between equipment for fire escape.
- Store items in an approved storage space. Take care to not stack boxes too high or too tight. Clearly label boxes with their contents.
- Keep all drawers and cupboard doors closed when unattended.
- Fire equipment, extinguishers, fire door exits, and sprinkler heads should remain unobstructed. Materials should be at least 50cm minimum away from sprinkler heads.

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4.2 Falls

- Use handrails when ascending and descending stairs.
- Do not place wastebaskets or other objects in walkways.
- Close file drawers when you leave the cabinet.
- Secure electrical cords and wires away from walkways.
- Always use a stepladder for overhead reaching. Do not use chairs as ladders.
- Clean up spills immediately.
- Pick up loose objects left on the floor.
- Never carry anything that obscures your vision.
- Wear stable shoes with non-slip soles.

4.3 Striking or Struck by Objects

Improper storage and material handling are often related to incidents in which office workers are struck by an object.


- Pay attention when walking in the office and do not carry objects that obstruct one's view. Do not read paperwork while walking.
- File drawers should be closed when not in use, and aisles and walkways kept clear of obstructions. Cabinets and desks should be arranged so that drawers do not open into walkways.
- Do not open multiple drawers at the same time. Do not use the tops of file cabinets for storage. In storage areas, place heavier items on bottom shelves to increase stability and stack boxes so that they will not fall over.
- Desk equipment can fall on feet, so keep equipment away from the edge of work surfaces. If not handled properly, objects being carried can fall onto a foot. Also, be alert when approaching a closed door. It suddenly may open in your direction.

4.4 Office Machinery and Tool

- Misuse of office tools, such as pens, pencils, paper, letter openers, scissors and staplers can cause cuts, punctures and related infections.
- Staplers - Always use a staple remover. Never test a jammed stapler with your thumb.
- Pencils, pens, scissors, etc. - Store sharp objects in a drawer or with the point down. Never hand someone a sharp object point first
- Machines with nip points or rotating parts must be guarded so that office workers cannot contact the moving parts.
- Secure machines that tend to move during operation.
- Avoid wearing long or loose clothing or accessories around machinery with moving parts.
- Take precautions when using photocopying machines.
 - Keep the document cover closed.
 - Avoid skin contact with photocopying chemicals
 - Clean all spills and dispose of waste properly.
 - Follow the manufacturer's instructions for troubleshooting.

4.5 Electrical Equipment

- Use only equipment that is properly grounded or double-insulated.
- Do not overload outlets.
- Minimize the use of extension cords. Do not plug two extension cords together.
- Do not cover power cords or extension cords with rugs or mats.
- Do not run electrical cords through pedestrian aisles.
- Unplug or disconnect machines before servicing or repairing.

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- Do not ignore the warning signs. If an item feels hot, makes an unusual noise (buzz or hum), smokes or sparks, take it out of service immediately.
- Inspect cords and equipment regularly, and report any defects immediately.
- Cover or guard any exposed electrical components or wires.
- Do not use electrical equipment or appliances near water or wet surfaces.
- Never use electrical equipment when hands or the equipment are wet.

4.6 Lighting

Poor office lighting can cause eyestrain, irritation, fatigue, watering and reddening of the eyelids, and a decrease in visual acuity. Headaches as well as neck and back pains may also occur. Poor lighting in the workplace is also associated with an increase in accidents.

- Replace faulty and/or burned out light and lamps.
- When possible, do not work facing windows, unshielded lamps, or other sources of glare.
- Adjustable shades should be used if workers face a window.
- Diffuse light will help reduce shadows. Indirect lighting and task lighting are recommended, especially when work spaces are separated by dividers.
- Task lamps are very effective in supplementing general office lighting for those who require or prefer additional lighting. Some task lamps permit several light levels.

4.7 Overexertion (Strain)

The majority of back injuries and other musculoskeletal disorders are the result of lifting, often done improperly. In general, most lifting in an office environment does not involve heavy objects, but if not done correctly, can cause severe stress on the back. Practicing good lifting technique significantly lowers the stress placed on the back and reduces the potential for injury. Things to consider when approaching a lift are:

- The weight of the object.
- The shape, firmness, and stability of the object (ability to maintain a good grip).
- The height of the lift.
- The distance the object is to be carried.

Train employees to ask for help from a co-worker or use a lifting aid, such as a cart or hand truck if they feel they cannot safely lift an object. Avoid awkward positions, reaching, and twisting while lifting. If seated, squat and stand to lift objects. Incredible amounts of strain are placed on the back when lifting or bending from a seated position, even when working with small objects. In addition, it is important to remember the same good lifting techniques used for picking up an object should also be practiced when putting an object down.

5. INCIDENT REPORTING

Accidents resulting in injuries must be reported to the PI and/or laboratory safety lead immediately after first aid is applied.

Seek medical attention when necessary at the University Health Centre or proceed to the Accident & Emergency units of National University Hospital after office hours.

All incidents or accidents have to be notified to OSHE within 24 hours via the online Accident and Incident Management System (AIMS) at https://inetapps.nus.edu.sg/osh/portal/eServices/ehs360_aims.html.



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6. REVISION HISTORY

Date Revised	Version No.	Author	Summary of Revisions
15-04-2019	001	Yeo Soh Bee	
15-04-2022	002	Adeline Chow	Update of approver (HOD): Prof Anantharaman Vathsala Section 4.1: Housekeeping practices. Replacing of faulty lightbulbs.