

# Workplace Health and Safety

## Hazards

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# Hazard Identification

- Working at computer workstations for long periods of time:
  - What are the risks?
  - What are the hazards?
- Some questions we need to ask
  - Is working at a computer workstation dangerous?
  - Is it safe?
  - Is it unhealthy?
  - How does the length of time affect the risk?

# Hazard: Definition

- A hazard is a source or potential source of human injury, ill health or disease
- Anything which might cause injury or ill health to *anyone* at or near a workplace is a hazard

# Hazard Identification

- Broad hazard categories:
  - Mechanical hazards
  - Physical hazards
  - Chemical hazards
  - Psychological hazards
  - Electrical hazards

# Mechanical Hazards

- Mechanical hazards include:
  - Filing cabinets that tend to tip when heavily laden top draws are open
  - Tripping hazards



# Physical Hazards

- Physical hazards include:
  - Glare or reflections from screens
  - Hot components of photocopiers
  - Poorly designed chairs that do not provide adequate back support
  - Poorly designed jobs and tasks that demand prolonged work in a fixed posture



# Chemical Hazards

- Chemical hazards include:
  - Vapours in the atmosphere
    - From paint, solvents, or airborne particles like photocopier toner
  - Corrosive or flammable liquids





# Psychological Hazards

- Psychological hazards include:
  - The need to perform excessive workloads under pressure
  - Being bullied by a co-worker or supervisor
  - Lack of satisfaction from a job where there is inadequate recognition of work performed
  - Repetitive work and insufficient task variety

# Electrical Hazards

- Electrical hazards include
  - Damaged electrical cords
  - Overloaded power outlets that may lead to the risk of electric shock



# Injuries caused by computer use

- Eye strain
  - Main source of light not shining in your face / screen
  - Tilt screen to avoid glare
  - Screen not too close to face, at eye level
  - Reduce contrast / brightness of screen
  - Frequently look away / focus on faraway objects
  - Have regular eye exams

# Injuries caused by computer use

- Muscle and joint problems
  - Caused by incorrect posture / incorrect furniture
- Obesity
- Photosensitive epileptic seizures
- Burns
  - From overheating laptops placed on lap

# Psychosocial Factors at Work

- Factors that can have an adverse effect on health and wellbeing:
  - Stress
  - Bullying
  - Occupational violence
  - Fatigue
- Risks to psychological health due to work should be viewed in the same way as other health and safety risks

# Hazard Identification

- Assess your workstation and environment and identify hazards
- Identify hazards in the virtual office:  
[http://www.comcare.gov.au/virtual\\_workplaces/virtual\\_office](http://www.comcare.gov.au/virtual_workplaces/virtual_office)

# Summary

- A hazard is a potential source of injury or ill-health
- There are several broad categories of hazard: mechanical, physical, chemical, psychological and electrical
- Even the relatively mundane task of operating a computer could be hazardous
- There are many non-obvious injuries that could be caused by computer use

# References

- Commonwealth of Australia. 2008. *Officewise: A guide to health and safety in the office*. [ONLINE] Available at: [https://www.comcare.gov.au/data/assets/pdf\\_file/0006/39570/Officewise\\_OHS1\\_Apr\\_10.pdf](https://www.comcare.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0006/39570/Officewise_OHS1_Apr_10.pdf). [Accessed 02 March 2016].