

## A BRIEF LOOK AT -

### ENVIRONMENTAL SAFETY AT THE OFFICE



In addition to Agency's other policies, procedures, and trainings, as well as the information in other "A Brief Look" lessons, environmental safety at the office may include, but is not limited to (in no particular order):

- icy areas,
- exits,
- stairways, and
- storage areas.

Let's look at these individually.

#### ICY AREAS

Outside surfaces should be maintained in winter so they are free of ice and snow. Get snow cleared away from walkways and driveways as soon as possible. Melting and refreezing of layered snow can cause heavy patches of ice. Use ice melting products regularly. If this isn't possible, then there should be a free clearance of 18 inches for safe passage, according to the Occupational Health and Safety Administration (OSHA).



Here are safety tips from [www.ehow.com](http://www.ehow.com):

1. Wear boots or sturdy shoes with non-skid soles. Don't walk on ice in shoes that have no traction.
2. Take your time. Getting in a hurry increases your chances of a fall because you're not paying attention.
3. Pay attention to ice that can be covered with snow. When you think you're in the clear you could still hit a patch and fall.
4. Balance yourself with your arms. Get your hands out of your pockets and distribute the weight of packages evenly to give you better balance.
5. Take short shuffling steps and avoid an erect posture. Walk as flat footed as possible.
6. Get help from someone who is wearing appropriate shoes or is more confident than you. Never be ashamed to ask for someone's arm to help you across a patch of ice.
7. If you feel yourself beginning to fall try to relax and roll as much as possible. This will help lessen the impact and may keep you from breaking a bone. Protect your head if at all possible by trying to keep it up and away from impact with the ice.

## EXITS



According to OSHA, there must be exit routes for employees to leave the workplace safely during emergencies.

For the most part, there should be at least two exit routes, remote from one another, to provide alternate means for employees to leave the workplace safely during an emergency.

Free and unobstructed access to each exit route must be provided to ensure safe exit during an emergency. The exit route must be free of material or equipment. An exit must lead directly outside or to a street, walkway, refuge area, or to an open space with access to the outside. The street, walkway, refuge area, or open space to which an exit leads must be large enough to accommodate all building occupants likely to use that exit.

An exit door must be able to be readily opened from the inside without keys, tools, or special knowledge. A device that locks only from the outside, such as a panic bar, is permitted. An exit door must be free of any device or alarm, which, if it fails, could restrict emergency use of an exit.

An exit route must not require employees to travel toward materials that burn very quickly, emit poisonous fumes, or are explosive, unless those materials are effectively shielded from the exit route.



An exit door must be free of signs or decorations that obscure its visibility.



Each exit route must be illuminated adequately.

Each exit must be clearly visible and must be marked by a distinctive sign reading "Exit."

Signs must be posted along the exit route indicating the direction of travel to the nearest exit.

Any doorway or passage that might be mistaken for an exit must be marked "Not an Exit" or with an indication of its actual use.



The line-of-sight to an exit sign must be uninterrupted.

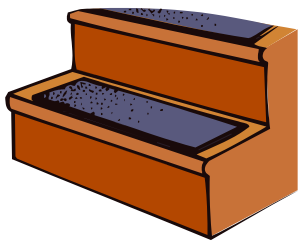


## STAIRWAYS

OSHA has specific requirements to protect employees on stairways:

1. Stairs with four or more risers shall be provided with at least one handrail. A stair rail system shall be provided on all unprotected sides or edges of stairways with a fall hazard of four feet or more.
2. Stairs shall be capable of supporting, without failure, at least five times their maximum intended load.

### SAFETY TIPS



Stair treads prevent slips and falls.



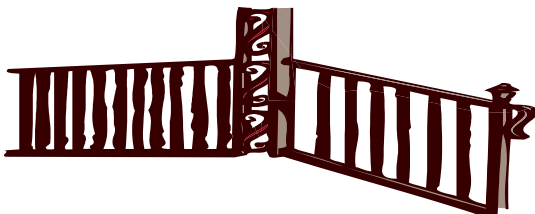
Never run on stairs.



Staircases should be well lit.



Wipe up spills and remove any clutter.

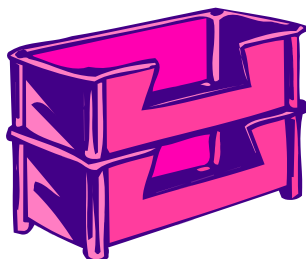
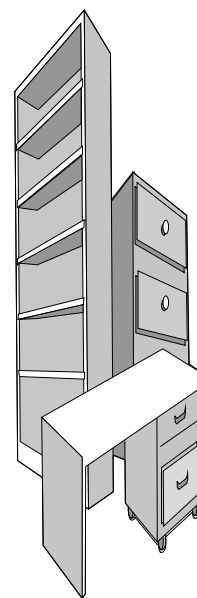


Handrails should be mounted directly on the wall by brackets attached to the lower side so there's nothing in the way of your hand. The surface along the top and sides should be smooth so you don't get slivers.

## STORAGE AREAS

Storage areas should be conveniently located. Doors should be marked “Not An Exit” or “Storage.” The room should be well lit and well organized. There should be an aisle at least three feet wide for safe movement within the storage area.

Choose shelving, cabinets, and other storage units used to meet the storage needs of the agency. Tall shelves should be fastened to the wall to prevent them from tipping over. Place heavier items on the bottom shelves. Use a sturdy step-stool to reach the smaller items on the top shelves.



Individual, well labeled bins can be placed on the shelves for storing small items. This will also make taking inventory much easier and more efficient.



The agency is responsible for maintaining patient/client records safely after discharge. Don't let the file cabinets become overly full so that records are damaged when trying to stuff them into drawers. Doing so could lead to hurting yourself, too!

If cleaning products or other combustibles are kept in the storage room, be sure the containers are well labeled and tightly closed. There should be adequate space between them and any other item to allow for good ventilation.



If “sharps” are returned to the office, they should be placed in the area designated for medical waste.

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### QUIZ

1. When walking on ice, take short shuffling steps.  
 True  
 False
  
2. Closet doors should be labeled "Closet" or "Not an Exit."  
 True  
 False
  
3. Stairways should be kept dry and clutter-free.  
 True  
 False
  
4. Taking inventory will be efficient if small articles are in individual bins.  
 True  
 False

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Signature

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Date

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**ANSWER KEY**

1. TRUE
2. TRUE
3. TRUE
4. TRUE