

**Guidance Documents**

**HMIS-GD-SP-8800**

**Office Safety**

Revision 1, Change 0

Published: 04/22/2026

Effective: 04/22/2026

Program: Safety Programs

Topic: Safety Programs

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**Use Type: Administrative**



- No USQ Required

**JHA:** Administrative

**Periodic Review Due Date:**04/22/2031

Rev. 1, Chg. 0

## **Change Summary**

### **Description of Change**

Changes required to align this procedure with current HMIS procedure requirements.

**Table of Contents**

1.0 PURPOSE .....2

2.0 SCOPE .....2

3.0 GUIDANCE.....2

    3.1 General Applications .....2

    3.2 Office Safety Practices.....2

    3.3 Administrative Area Inspections.....3

    3.4 General Safety & Health Considerations.....4

        3.4.1 Workstations .....4

        3.4.2 Office Health.....6

        3.4.3 Reducing Office Injuries.....7

        3.4.4 Additional Concerns .....9

4.0 RECORD IDENTIFICATION .....9

5.0 SOURCES .....9

    5.1 References.....9

## Office Safety

Published Date: 04/22/2026

Effective Date: 04/22/2026

## 1.0 PURPOSE

This document provides guidance to prevent injuries from common office safety hazards. It is designed to complement HMIS-OTHER-SP-1200369, *HMIS General Hazard Analysis*.

## 2.0 SCOPE

This Level 1 Administrative Guidance Document is applicable to Hanford Mission Integration Solutions (HMIS) employees working in offices.

## 3.0 GUIDANCE

### 3.1 General Applications

- The manager responsible for an office environment can:
  - Use this guidance to ensure unsafe conditions described in this document are not present in office areas.
  - Use this guidance to inform workers in office areas of standard office safety practices.
- For office workers:
  - Use these practices to ensure hazards are recognized and mitigated, and injuries are prevented.

### 3.2 Office Safety Practices

- Learn how to respond to emergencies by referring to building/office emergency plans. That plan discusses building egress routes, emergency phone numbers, location of alarms and fire extinguishers.
- Improve office safety by incorporating the following safety considerations into office arrangements:
  - Keep floor surfaces free of slipping or tripping hazards. For example:
    - Keep rugs or other coverings in good condition (no holes).
    - Use rugs to limit the amount of water tracked into an area.
    - Mop up spills or standing water or post warning signs/barricades.
    - Do not allow door props to be used to hold fire doors open or become tripping hazards.
    - Control ice on walkways, entrances, and stairs.
- Ensure that aisles and passageways provide safe access for normal and emergency use by:
  - Not allowing furniture or equipment to block emergency exits, emergency equipment, or electrical panels.
  - Not leaving drawers and cabinet doors open into walkways.
  - Maintaining adequate illumination to prevent slips, trips, and falls.

## Office Safety

Published Date: 04/22/2026

Effective Date: 04/22/2026

- Prohibiting storage of any kind in stairwells and emergency exit areas.
- Arrange and use office equipment and furniture safely by:
  - Filling bookshelves and filing cabinets from the bottom up (keeping heavier items on the lower shelves/drawers).
  - Stabilizing bookshelves, file cabinets or lockers to keep them from tipping over. Stability can be achieved by bolting units together or to a wall.
  - Report damaged equipment and furniture to be removed from service.
  - Ensuring a two-to-three-inch distance from the wall when moving equipment into office space.
- Make efforts to prevent cuts by:
  - Not placing broken glass or other sharp objects (coffee can lids) in a waste container unless wrapped or in another container, or if possible, depositing sharp or broken objects directly into dumpsters.
  - Storing sharp or pointed objects in a manner that reduces the chance of accidental contact.
- Make sure fire protection systems are NOT compromised by:
  - Providing clear space between equipment or combustibles and any heat sources.
  - Not blocking exits, exit paths, sprinklers, or accumulating excess combustibles.
  - Contacting your fire protection group for additional information on the safety of seasonal decorations or the use of portable electric space heaters.
- 
- Keep kitchen or eating areas in a safe and sanitary condition by:
  - Using caution to avoid burns from food heated in ovens or microwaves.
  - Placing knives in a separate drawer or using a divider in a drawer.
  - Cleaning up all spills quickly or barricade off the area so others will not slip and fall.
  - Providing covered waste receptacles for all food waste or making sure they are taken out of the facility on a routine basis.
  - Store chemicals in areas separate from foods items.
  - Routinely clean microwaves and refrigerators.

### 3.3 Administrative Area Inspections

HMIS-PRO-SP-7652, *Safety and Health Inspections*, requires office areas to be inspected quarterly and cites checklists for use during an office inspection.

In line with "behavior based" philosophy, make observations of what people are doing. For example, watch for employees running, carrying awkward loads, not using handrails, lifting paper boxes or other loads improperly, leaving desk or file drawers open (creating tripping hazards), etc. Watch for improper use of tools.

## Office Safety

Published Date: 04/22/2026

Effective Date: 04/22/2026

"Administrative areas" include copy machine areas, kitchens, janitor's storage areas, telephone terminal and file server rooms, fire sprinkler control and riser rooms, conference rooms, supply and electronic equipment rooms, and restrooms.

It is helpful to get a previously completed checklist from the Building Administrator or Safety Specialist for reference.

### 3.4 General Safety & Health Considerations

#### 3.4.1 Workstations

- Work areas are safer if:
  - They fit the operator and allow for full range of motions involved in performing the task.
  - They have adequate room for equipment and materials that make up the workstation.
- Work surfaces contribute to a safe work area if:
  - They are stable and adjustable in height.
  - They provide enough leg room.
- Display screens/document holders contribute to a safe work area if:
  - They are large enough to display a sizable amount of information at the same time.
  - Screens have character brightness and contrast controls.
  - Screens are adjustable (horizontally and vertically).
  - The viewing distance between the user's eyes and the screen is between 16 and 22 inches.
  - The screen angle is between 10 degrees to 20 degrees from vertical.
  - The top of the screen is just below eye level.
  - The reference documents used with the computer are the same distance from the eyes as the display screen and adjacent to and at the same height as the display screen (preventing eye, neck and back fatigue).
- Keyboards contribute to a safe work area if:
  - They are detached from the display screen
  - They have a thin profile to minimize wrist deviation.
  - Keys provide tactile and audible feedback.
  - A palm/wrist rest is used to minimize hand contact with sharp table edges and wrist deviation.
- Chairs contribute to a safe work area if:
  - They are visually inspected on a periodic basis during management building inspections.

**Office Safety**

Published Date: 04/22/2026

Effective Date: 04/22/2026

- Visual inspections include any visible cracks to metal or plastic components, loose hardware, missing bolts or screws, backs and seats firmly attached, and arms securely fastened.
  - If the chair is on wheels, ensure casters are in good working order and roll freely.
  - If any deficiencies are found with a chair it must be immediately pulled from service until it can be repaired by maintenance services.
  - Annual inspections are a requirement per HMIS-PRO-SP-7652. Facility Management must ensure these inspections are completed by submitting a Kinetic Service Request (KSR).
  - They fit the person (seat pan needs to be adjustable, not press against backs of legs and fit the user size-wise), requirements of the task, and environment in which they are being used.
  - They have good stability (five-point base).
  - They have adjustable height and adjustable backrest (forward/back, up/down).
  - They have a deep seat pan that promotes lower back contact with the backrest.
  - The seat pan has a softly padded, rounded front edge (waterfall).
  - Seat covering material is porous and breathable.
  - Backrests are contoured to the curve of the lower back.
  - They have armrests in good condition.
  - Arm rests can be adjusted to the height of the task.
  - Arm rests are low and short enough to fit the chair under the work surface and allow the user to get close enough to the work surface to use the backrest.
  - The armrests will support the full arm at the base of the hand.
  - When an operator's feet do not rest completely on the floor, a footrest is provided.
  - Footrests are adjustable (height/inclination), do not restrict leg movement, are easy to remove, support the soles of both feet and are covered with a nonskid material.
- Temperature and Humidity contribute best to a safe work area if:
    - During the summer, a comfortable 73 to 79 degrees Fahrenheit with 50% relative humidity is maintained.
    - During the winter, a comfortable 68 to 75 degrees Fahrenheit with 50% relative humidity is maintained.
    - Diffusers and thermostats are adjusted only by qualified personnel.
  - Noise levels are best if:
    - Ambient sound levels are kept below 55 decibels.
    - Offices are arranged so phone conversations are directed away from co-workers.
  - Ventilation/Air Quality contributes to a safe work area if:
    - Chemicals are stored away from occupied offices in an appropriate cabinet.
    - Chemical storage areas are vented directly outside the building away from the building's general ventilation intake.

## Office Safety

Published Date: 04/22/2026

Effective Date: 04/22/2026

### 3.4.2 Office Health

- Posture is proper if:
  - Your back is straight and well back into your chair.
  - Your neck and back are in a straight line.
  - Your head is up and eye level is just above the top of screen.
  - Your thighs are supported and parallel to the floor.
  - Your feet are flat on the floor or on a footrest.
  - Your upper arms hang relaxed at your sides, with forearms at a right angle to your upper arms.
  - Your elbows are close to your sides. Your wrist is straight, in line with your hand and forearm.
  
- You are using Proper Lifting Techniques if:
  - The preferred method of lifting heavy loads is understood as: first, use a mechanical aid (hand truck, cart); second, ask a co-worker for help; third, lift by yourself only if well within your limits.
  - When lifting by yourself, you first examine the load to determine if you can lift it safely.
  - You stand close to the object to be lifted, with feet spread shoulder width apart.
  - You don't twist your body to get in position.
  - You squat down, keeping your back straight.
  - You grasp the object firmly, lift with your legs, and slowly straighten your legs.
  - You hold the object close to your body as you carry it.
  - When setting the load down, you squat down; bend at the hips and knees while keeping your lower back arched inward.
  
- You can reduce fatigue by:
  - Using good posture.
  - Eliminating glare.
  - Positioning screen directly in front of you at a proper angle and adjusting your screen for proper contrast/brightness.
  - Getting up, stretching, and moving around regularly (once every hour for 1 to 3 minutes is recommended).
  - Using chairs providing proper back and shoulder support.
  
- You can reduce risk of repetitive motion injuries (carpal tunnel) by:
  - Requesting an ergonomic evaluation of your workstation if you spend over one and a half hours continuously using your keyboard in a day.
  
- Body mechanics can be optimized by:
  - Avoiding long awkward reaches and slumped shoulders.
  - Avoiding working with your neck bent forward.
  - Using a shoulder rest on your telephone for prolonged use.

## Office Safety

Published Date: 04/22/2026

Effective Date: 04/22/2026

### 3.4.3 Reducing Office Injuries

- Cuts/Punctures can be prevented by:
  - Not storing sharp objects haphazardly in a drawer.
  - Using separate containers for storing tacks/push pins.
  - When not in use, locking paper cutter blades in the down position.
  - When opening letters/cartons closed with tape, use a letter opener.
  - When cutting, cut away from your body.
  
- Slips/Trips/Falls can be prevented by:
  - Watching out for and reporting hazards in the office: open desk/file drawers, loose mats, highly waxed floors, spilled liquids, small-dropped items, uncovered electric cords/phone lines, obstructed walkways/protruding desks and shelves.
  - Adopting a slow and careful pace, watching where you are going at all times.
  - Wearing shoes appropriate for the environmental conditions and walking surfaces.
  
- Stairway safety can be maintained by:
  - Using handrails on stairways. Signs can be placed at landings (bottom/middle/top of stairs) to help remind employees to utilize or grasp handrails when ascending or descending stairways.
  - Using stairways correctly:
    - Taking one step at a time.
    - Avoiding things that obstruct your vision.
    - Not hurrying.
    - When carrying items, keep one hand free.
  - Providing adequate lighting.
  
- Doors, file cabinets, shelves, tables and desks can be kept in safe configuration by:
  - Always using the handle when closing a file drawer, to prevent catching fingers.
  - Never leaning against a file drawer while looking through it, to prevent accidental shutting.
  - Never overloading or storing heavy objects in top drawers of filing cabinets or on top shelves.
  - Never opening more than one file drawer at a time.
  - Opening file drawers only as far as necessary, closing drawers gently.
  - Shutting file drawers when not in use, to prevent tripping/tipping.
  - Making sure shelves are secured/stable.
  - Not storing anything within 18 inches of sprinkler heads.
  
- Office equipment/furniture is properly used when:
  - Equipment is used as it was designed.
  - Office equipment is disconnected before performing maintenance and/or repairs.
  - Electrical cords are disconnected only by grasping the plug.
  - Offices are checked routinely for frayed or broken electrical cords.
  - Physical contact with toners or other chemicals is avoided.

## Office Safety

Published Date: 04/22/2026

Effective Date: 04/22/2026

- Hands are washed after handling chemicals.
- All damaged equipment is reported and properly placed out-of-service.
- Liquids are kept away from electrical office equipment.
  
- Emergencies can be minimized by:
  - Learning emergency evacuation routes/procedures in advance.
  - Knowing the location of fire extinguishers and fire alarm pull stations.
  - Posting emergency phone numbers by all phones.
  
- Fire prevention can be enhanced by:
  - Properly storing and/or disposing of all materials that may be a fire hazard: paper, cleaning fluids, photocopier inks, oil or solvent soaked rags, etc.
  - Keeping your work area clean.
  - Never blocking fire exits, fire extinguishers, alarms, sprinklers, or electrical panels.
  - Not using timers as the sole method of turning off coffee makers. Unplugging or turning them off when not in use.
  
- Electrical safety can be enhanced by:
  - Using only electrical appliances (coffee makers, space heaters, etc.) that are Nationally Recognized Testing Laboratory (NRTL) listed.
  - Using only extension cords as temporary power sources appropriate for the use and NRTL listed.
  - Inspecting extension cords prior to use, as well as periodically removing them if damaged.
  - Never daisy chaining extension cords or power strips.
  - When extension cords/flexible cords are exposed to damage (run across walkways), protecting them using a cord cover.
  - Not pinching flexible/extension cords between wall and office furniture.
  - Using only surge protective devices that meet manufacturer's recommendations for equipment.
  - Testing Ground Fault Circuit Interrupters (GFCI) according to manufacturer recommendations.
  
- Battery safety (Dry Cell) can be achieved by:
  - Removing batteries from instruments as soon as the batteries have completed their useful life or whenever the instrument is to be stored for long periods. This minimizes leakage.
  - Recharging only batteries specifically marked "rechargeable" using only the battery type recommended by the equipment manufacturer.
  - Not storing batteries or battery-powered equipment in high temperature areas.
  - Not exposing batteries to chemicals.

**NOTE:** *Contact your building administrator for directions on how to dispose of batteries safely.*

**Office Safety**

Published Date: 04/22/2026

Effective Date: 04/22/2026

- Hazards of holiday decorations can be minimized by:
  - Using only decorations that are either inherently fire resistant or treated with a flame retardant.
  - Trees are decorated only with NRTL-listed miniature electric lights in good working condition.
  - Not allowing candles or other sources of open flame.

**3.4.4 Additional Concerns**

Other things - to, from, and around the office - can be made safer by the following:

- Hazards of parking lots can be reduced by:
  - Remembering the 360-degree rule. Before getting into your vehicle, walk around to see if anything obstructs your path.
  - Watching for pedestrians.
  - Awareness of freezing fog or moisture that may accumulate on exterior walking and driving surfaces.
- Impacts of unusual weather can be minimized by:
  - Wearing appropriate apparel for weather, especially footwear.
  - Watching for ice in cold weather. Using salt that is provided. Doing some shoveling when appropriate.
  - Awareness that, in windy weather, materials including ice can blow off roofs and cause injuries.
- Biological Hazards can be reduced by:
  - Watching out for pests such as snakes and insects during the summer months.
  - If you are stung or bitten, go to the Site Occupational Medical Contractor.

**4.0 RECORD IDENTIFICATION**

No records are generated by the performance of this procedure.

**5.0 SOURCES****5.1 References**

HMIS-OTHER-SP-1200369, *HMIS General Hazard Analysis*

HMIS-PRO-SP-7652, *Safety and Health Inspections*

HMIS-PRO-SP-62772, *Ergonomics*

HMIS-RD-SP-10321, *Walking-Working Surfaces*