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INJURIES

With long hours and client demands, workplace safety may not be at the forefront of every accounting firm manager's mind. However, accidents can happen and often negatively impact employee morale and increase business costs.

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Like most office-based jobs, those in the financial services industry are generally not prone to extreme workplace injuries. However, this doesn't mean that injuries do not occur on the job in the accounting sector. In fact, according to the [Bureau of Labor](#)

[Statistics \(BLS\)](#), 1,340 cases of nonfatal injuries and illnesses occurred within the

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Accountants are used to watching the bottom line and making calculated decisions to improve financial outcomes. Taking a similar approach to workplace safety is smart business. Being proactive, [enforcing safety programs](#) and holding employees accountable for fostering a safe office is good for business. Doing so can prevent workplace injuries and keep employees safe, as well as help better control related business costs due to potentially higher workers' compensation insurance premiums, reduced employee productivity and decreased morale triggered by on-the-job injuries.

A strong culture of safety within the workplace can encourage employees to uphold safety best practices. This includes implementing safety training programs that foster an environment of continuous improvement and conducting trainings often, encouraging habits that help prevent common illnesses and injuries, and purchasing any needed protective equipment or ergonomic tools. Safety training should be conducted during new employee onboarding sessions to demonstrate a commitment to safety from the start. Above all, management must set the tone that safety is a priority and a strategic imperative to the organization, both for the benefit of the employees and for the benefit of the company.

Here are the most common workplace safety risks for those in the accounting industry and tips for encouraging staff to help prevent them:

Ergonomic Injuries

Accountants and other finance professionals can be at risk for ergonomic injuries. Long hours spent sitting at a desk and doing repetitive movements like typing can cause musculoskeletal disorders including carpal tunnel syndrome and tendonitis. Poor office ergonomics make these injuries more likely.

Setting up employee workstations according to ergonomic principles and investing in equipment such as standing desks, ergonomic mouse pads and chair supports can

help alleviate muscle strain in an employee's back, wrist, and arms that can develop

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As many accounting professionals spend most of their working hours in front of a computer screen, they can be at risk for computer vision syndrome, or digital eye strain. This type of eye and vision-related problem is caused by prolonged time spent looking at a computer, tablet, or cell phone resulting in eye discomfort, vision problems, dry eyes, headaches, and neck and shoulder pain. Certain environmental factors can exacerbate these symptoms including poor lighting, screen glare, poor seating posture, and untreated vision problems.

Discomfort can increase as screen usage increases, so accountants should be particularly aware of this issue during busy periods, such as tax season. Symptoms typically decline once screen usage has stopped, however some individuals can experience sustained vision impairment, such as blurred distance vision, even after they have stopped using a screen. Prolonged symptoms should be addressed immediately, as they will continue to persist and even worsen with continued digital screen use.

Managers can encourage employees to incorporate the following preventative measures recommended by the [American Optometric Association](#):

- **Protect eyes:** Blue-light blocking glasses or glasses with special lens tints or coatings can help ease eye strain. Practice owners and managers can consider ordering these special glasses for their office.
- **Make adjustments:** Tilt computer screens 15 to 20 degrees (about 4 or 5 inches) below eye level. Sit with 20 to 28 inches of space between the eye and the computer screen.
- **Take rest breaks:** After two hours of continuous computer use, take a 15-minute break to rest eyes. Throughout the day after every 20 minutes of computer viewing, view something in the distance for 20 seconds to help readjust the eyes.
- **Avoid glare:** Minimize screen glare by adjusting overhead lighting and installing blinds or drapes on windows. A screen glare filter can also be used to help

diminish the amount of light reflected from the screen.

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supply boxes and extension cords.

Employees may be more likely to help mitigate these risks if they have an easy avenue for reporting them. Managers can develop a safety suggestion box or uphold an open-door policy for employees to report any safety risk they see.

How to respond after an injury occurs

In addition to taking preventative measures, it is also crucial employees understand what to do should a workplace injury occur. Practice owners and managers can make sure all team members are prepared in the event of an accident by offering training to employees.

First, managers should encourage injured employees to seek any needed medical treatment. If the injury is serious, call 911 immediately. However, in non-emergency situations, managers can consult their insurance carrier to locate an in-network medical provider. Staying in-network can reduce delays in service and help to manage treatment costs. Some insurance carriers, including EMPLOYERS Insurance, also offer [Injured Employee Hotlines](#) for policyholders. These 24/7 hotlines are staffed by registered nurses who can provide guidance to injured employees on the appropriate level of medical treatment.

In addition, owners and managers should investigate and document incidents thoroughly to ensure the same type of incident will not happen again.

With long hours and client demands, workplace safety may not be at the forefront of every accounting firm manager's mind. However, accidents can happen and often negatively impact employee morale and increase business costs. Firm owners and managers play a key role in both addressing safety risks as well as establishing a culture where following safety best practices is everyone's responsibility.

Encouraging understanding of the potential workplace hazards in accounting firms,

the necessary precautions to mitigate them, and how to respond after an injury is key

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