

Office Chairs Do's and Don'ts

Data from the Consumer Product Safety Commission indicates that falling from chairs sometimes hurts people. Usually resulting in bumps, bruises, strains and sprains, these injuries are almost always easily treated. Falls from chairs can be because of misuse of the chair or failure of one of the chair's components. In either case, it is important to take adequate precautions to prevent injuries before an incident occurs. This is done by proper use of chairs and periodic inspection of chairs to detect potential failure.

Falls are the most common office accident, accounting for the greatest number of disabling injuries in offices. Falls from a chair occurs when you lose your balance in the chair from excessive bending, twisting, and leaning backward while seated. One of the most common causes of office falls is bending while seated in an "unstable" chair. And, using a chair in place of a stepladder causes some office falls.

Recently an Air Quality employee was sitting in her office chair when one leg of the 5-legged base broke. The chair toppled and the employee fell to the floor striking her left arm and thigh. Luckily, she only experienced soreness in her arm and thigh. Close inspection of the 5 legged base found that the 5 legged base of the chair was of cast aluminum construction and one leg had severed, as though it had been cut evenly. Could this have been detected during a period inspection? We're not sure. However, when making a periodic inspection of chairs don't forget to inspect for cracks or stresses in the base of the chair.

This Safety Alert can help you maintain the safe chair, and also safe use of your office chair.

Do's

- Always follow the assembly directions completely. Make sure all the pieces are placed in proper order so that the chair stays tight and together.
- Pay special attention to making sure the casters or wheels are fully inserted into the base of the unit.
- Only use office chairs (with a pivoting base) that have a 5 legged base.
- Every 6 months or so, inspect the chair to make sure all the parts or components of the chair are tightened to ensure stability. Look for defective casters, loose securing bolts, loose arms, broken adjustable mechanism, and evidence of cracks or stresses in the base of the chair.
- Always keep the base of the chair completely on the floor.
- Many office chairs are equipped with a tension control on the mechanism to compensate for different body weights. Always ensure that the control is properly adjusted, resulting in a smooth and controlled tilt motion.

Don'ts

- Don't lean so far back in your chair that the wheels or legs lift up off the floor. Leaning can cause the chair to slip out from under you, cause structural damage, or can loosen important connections that can cause the chair to fall apart.
- Never put all your weight at the very front edge of the chair. If you sit too far forward, the chair can tip over. Use a chair with a forward tilt mechanism if the task requires sitting in a forward position.

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