Workplace Risk Assessments

- Conduct preliminary risk assessment that should factor in the following issues in addition to fire safety arrangements, slips, trips and falls etc.
- Plan desk areas, communal work spaces, photocopy areas, staff rooms, tea/coffee areas, kitchens, storage areas, meeting rooms, other special use areas etc. All areas of the building should meet DDA accessibility requirements for a "barrier free" working environment. Electrical cable management and placement of copiers, printers etc to reduce or eliminate intrusive noise elements, discomfort from cooling units.
- Consideration for employees that have had modifications to desks e.g. height adjustments or adjustments made to accommodate disabled or mobility impaired employees.
- Desks must have sufficient room to conform to the display screen equipment regulations and must not be set up in such a way that prevents improvements or modifications from being undertaken if risks are identified.
- Determine if staff need privacy due to the work they do (walls/doors vs. cubicles), separate telephone/meeting rooms.
- Determine the number and placement of electrical outlets, computer cabling, telephone lines, etc. Cable management that allows safe access for IT staff but doesn't cause trip hazards.
- Determine the number of washroom facilities, toilets, showers, etc. (some of these items may be determined by building codes or other legislation).
- Review all policies such as emergency response and security to ensure they match the needs of the new working environment arrangements.
- Check both the ventilation (air movement) and the air quality (possible contaminants, off-gassing, etc.). Consideration must be given to avoid placing desks in areas where employees could be affected by draughts.
- Environmental factors, heat, light and noise – Overhead lighting should not cause glare or discomfort for users of display screen equipment, provision for comfort cooling during hot weather periods, measures designed to help reduce or baffle noise
- Allow staff an orientation period to the building, they will need to familiarise themselves with fire exits and assembly points and the general layout.
- Monitor staff adjustment to new facility. Do some policies or office etiquette guidelines need to be changed?

What are some hazards that may be introduced when moving?

Hazards that are introduced include:

- Trip and fall hazards due to clutter from boxes, furniture, trolleys, etc.
- Obstruction of walkways, corridors, hallways and doorways etc.
- Manual Handling issues such as lifting, shifting, pushing, pulling, packing, unpacking, etc.
- Use of cleaning products.
- Dust.
- Work-station set up - new arrangement of furniture or in a different space will need an ergonomic evaluation to ensure fit to worker, no glare from lights or windows, etc.

What is the purpose of workplace housekeeping?

Poor housekeeping can be a cause of accidents, such as:

- Tripping over loose objects and cables on floors, stairs and corridors.
- Being hit by falling objects
- Slipping on greasy, wet or dirty surfaces
- Striking against projecting, poorly stacked items or misplaced material
- Cutting, puncturing, or tearing the skin of hands or other parts of the body on projecting nails, wire or furniture

To avoid these hazards, a workplace must "maintain" order throughout a workday. Although this effort requires a great deal of management and planning, the benefits are many.

What are some benefits of good housekeeping practices?

Effective housekeeping results in:

- reduced handling to ease the flow of materials
- fewer tripping and slipping accidents in clutter-free and spill-free work areas
- decreased fire hazards
- lower worker exposures to hazardous substances (e.g. dusts, vapours)
- better control of tools and materials, including inventory and supplies
- more efficient equipment cleanup and maintenance
- better hygienic conditions leading to improved health
- more effective use of space
- reduced property damage by improving preventive maintenance
- improved morale
- improved productivity (tools and materials will be easy to find)