1. **Identification of Workplace Hazard**

   General office and commercial establishment safety is not specifically regulated by Cal/OSHA standards. However, the Injury and Illness Prevention Standard requires employers to identify and prevent any hazards that may be present. Therefore, information on general office injury prevention is provided in this Hazard Prevention Data Sheet to assist employers to address office hazards. In addition, most offices and commercial establishments use computers and video display terminals. Operators are potentially exposed to the hazard known as repetitive motion ergonomics injury. Given its broad applicability, this hazard is addressed as part of general office safety. Finally, most offices and commercial establishments use relatively small volumes of chemical substances which are subject to the Cal/OSHA Hazard Communication Standard.

2. **Management and Trainer Information**

   The following information on the types of hazards offices and commercial establishments frequently present should be used to recognize and address any such hazards found. The types of hazards associated with general office and commercial establishments area listed below:

   (1) Office furniture may expose employees to hazards such as file cabinet drawers pinching hands and fingers, tipping over due to drawers being left open, or causing injury by obstructing an aisle.

   (2) Electrical appliances may cause tripping hazards by cords being improperly routed or electrical and fire hazards by improper use of extension cords or poor maintenance. Also, attempts at unauthorized maintenance can cause serious injury.

   (3) Office equipment like scissors, paper cutters, letter openers and other sharp objects can cause cuts and punctures if improperly used or stored.

   (4) Back and joint injuries may occur due to excessive lifting or improper lifting techniques or both.

   (5) Falls may occur due to improper use of stools and other furniture to reach storage areas.

   (6) Employees may be injured in chair falls due to unsafe chairs or floor surfaces or leaning too far backward in a chair.

   (7) Objects or spilled materials on floors can cause slipping hazards.

   (8) Employee use of a workplace kitchen can result in burns, lacerations and typical household injuries.
Office Ergonomics Safety (Repetitive Motion Injury Prevention)

Cal/OSHA’s ergonomics standard for repetitive motion injury (RMI) prevention requires any employer with more than two RMIs in a year to establish a formal prevention program. Given the requirement to prevent injuries in the Injury and Illness Prevention Standard and to avoid the costs of such injuries, even exempt employers should attempt to prevent such injuries from occurring through methods like those described below:

1. Video display terminal operators are potentially exposed to repetitive motion injuries, including eye strain from visual stress and cumulative trauma disorders, like carpal tunnel syndrome and similar injuries due to keyboard operation.

2. Preventive measures exist that may minimize the potential hazard, including hand exercises, adjustable keyboard and work station design, add-on protection like wrist pads and varying work activities.

3. Employers should make reasonable efforts to prevent repetitive motion injuries upon their identification.

Office Chemical Safety

Employee exposure to hazardous substances contained in products even to the relatively small extent which occurs in offices and commercial establishments is subject to the Cal/OSHA Hazard Communication Standard. An office or commercial establishment may comply by simply meeting the minimum elements of the standard which includes the following:

1. The employer should determine what chemical substances are considered occupational use chemicals, like correction fluid, copier toner, spray paint, inks, etc., if used in significant volume, versus those which are consumer product being used at the same rate as a consumer, like bug killer, furniture polish, bathroom cleaner, etc.

2. Occupational chemicals are subject to the hazard communication program and must meet the minimum elements of the standard, which include: a written program that may be satisfied by this Hazard Prevention Data Sheet, a copy of a Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS) for each covered chemical and training of employees on the information on the MSDS and label and how to use the product safely.

(3) The person responsible for the Injury and Illness Prevention Program should assure that all of the above requirements are satisfied and be able to document compliance. There are no small employer exemptions from the Hazard Communication Standard.
3. Employee Safe Work Practices and Personal Protective Equipment

Office and Commercial Establishment Safety

All employees must comply with the following safe work practices:

Office furniture and equipment

(1) Exercise care in using file cabinets. Do not pull out more than one file cabinet drawer at a time. Do not leave drawers open when unattended. Be careful when other employees are working in the file area.

(2) Do not obstruct aisles with electrical power cords. Do not overload extension cords and electrical receptacles.

(3) Do not attempt any unauthorized service on office equipment. If a circuit breaker trips repeatedly, report this to your supervisor.

(4) Use care in using and storing sharp instruments like scissors, letter openers and similar objects in drawers.

(5) Do not lean back on chairs. Assure that bases are supportive and floor surfaces level. Report any problems to your supervisor.

(6) Do not use stools, boxes or other unstable platforms to reach high areas.

(7) Use care in using kitchen utensils and appliances when provided by the employer.

Safe work practices

(1) Clean up any spills of water or other substances immediately or monitor the area after notifying your supervisor.

(2) Use care in lifting or moving heavy objects - use proper lifting techniques or obtain assistance.

(3) Do not store heavy or frequently used objects at higher storage locations.

(4) Do not block aisles, exit doors or any safety device with any object or material.

Ergonomics (repetitive motion stress) safety

(1) Video Display Terminal (VDT) operators should be aware of potential visual strain and report any problems to your supervisor.

(2) To avoid VDT visual strain, make sure that background lighting does not cause screen glare (if so, request a filter) and that eyes are appropriately positioned for comfortable viewing.

(3) Use break periods and other opportunities to vary tasks to rest eyes; for example, do not read a newspaper.
(4) Be aware of potential hand and wrist injuries from keyboard operation. If discomfort or numbness are experienced, report this to your supervisor or person responsible for injury and illness prevention.

(5) To avoid wrist and hand injuries, be sure that keyboards are used in comfortable position and moved as necessary to relieve strain. As your supervisor about wrist rests and other add-on devices that are available to improve comfort.

**Office chemical safety**

(1) Use any office chemical including cleaners, correction fluid, copier toners, etc. with care and according to label instructions.

(2) If there is a mishap and a chemical spills, notify your supervisor and upon authorization, clean it up immediately.

(3) Know the hazards associated with each chemical you use. This information is available on labels, Material Safety Data Sheets and from your supervisor.

(4) If exposed to a chemical substance or you experience any discomfort in using a material, immediately report the problem to your supervisor or person responsible for injury and illness prevention.