

Office Fire Safety

Includes Computer Equipment

Policy

It is the policy of Western Washington University that providing a safe and healthful workplace includes minimizing the risk of fire and maximizing the life-safety of employees and students.

Compliance with office fire safety procedures is the responsibility of the department head or center director, who may delegate these tasks to others. Supervisors are responsible to the director or department head for areas under their purview. Each person is responsible for awareness of fire safety and bringing fire hazards to their supervisor's attention or the attention of the Environmental Health and Safety office if a supervisor's response is not forthcoming. (Approved 4/19/93)



Parks Hall Fire— July 3, 2002
Destruction from an electrical fire related to computer equipment in Room 310

Procedure

To reduce the risk of fire in offices, you must follow this procedure:

1. **Use only electrical equipment that bears the Underwriter's Laboratories (UL) seal of approval.** This includes office equipment such as, computers, monitors, extension cords, multiple outlet strips, coffee makers, microwave ovens, and space heaters.

It includes University-owned items and personal items used at the University. For a small fee, the Facilities Management Electric Shop may prepare electrical devices in accordance with local ordinances.

2. **Use only extension cords that are rated adequately for the capacity of the equipment.** Replace cracked, worn or damaged cords.

ONLY use 3-wire extension cords for appliances with 3-prong plugs. NEVER cover extension cords with objects or paper while in use or coiled.

3. **Avoid overloading circuits. Plug your equipment directly into the outlet strip.**
 - Never increase the number of outlets with multiple outlet plugs. With multiple power cords plugged in, it is sometimes referred to as an 'octopus.'
 - Use appropriately-rated multiple outlet strips with 12-gauge wire plugged directly into an outlet.
 - Never plug one multiple outlet strip or extension cord into another in a 'daisy chain' fashion.
4. **Never use hotplates** or units with open or exposed heating elements.
5. **ALWAYS keep combustible materials such as paper, books and plastic away** from electrical devices, such as computers, space heaters or
6. **Consider timers which turn coffee makers and space heaters off automatically.**
7. **Turn off computers, monitors and printers over nights and weekends** to the extent possible. If computers must remain on, turn off monitors and printers.
8. **Administrators assign** specific personnel the responsibility for turning off common equipment at the end of each work day. Administrators establish back-up assignments and appropriate communication processes for their unit to ensure equipment is off.
9. **Avoid coffee makers and other equipment which have been recalled** by the manufacturer in conjunction with the U.S. Consumer Products Safety Commission. Information is available from <http://www.cpsc.gov/>
10. These procedures must be followed, unless Environmental Health and Safety provides specific approval otherwise.

Environmental Health and Safety

650-3064

A Division of Business and Financial Affairs

Risk Management
Workers' Compensation
Chemical and Biological Materials Management
Hazardous Building Materials Management

Occupational Safety
Fire Safety
Ergonomics
Safety Training

Environmental Management
Industrial Hygiene
Emergency Planning
Chemical Spill Response
Indoor Air Quality