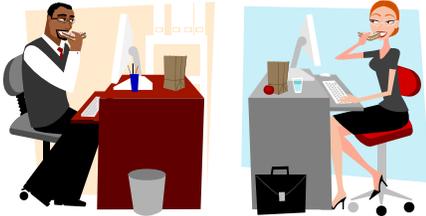


January 2008

RM News & Notes



Columbia County Board of Commissioners Risk Management Department

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Tip of the Week: You are Where You Eat

Consider this: Studies indicate that the average desktop is home to 400 times more bacteria than the average toilet seat.

The five most germ-contaminated spots were (in order) phones, desktops, water fountain handles, microwave door handles and keyboards. The office toilet seat had the lowest bacteria levels of the 12 surfaces tested. Even the office candy jar can be risky if the candies aren't individually wrapped or the hands that reach for them aren't clean.

Keep your desk clean. Don't assume the cleaning staff will do it for you. Regularly sanitize your work space using disposable anti-microbial wipes or a cloth with cleaner. Wash your hands often, using soap and hot water for 20 seconds. If you don't have time for soap and water, use a hand sanitizer stored in your desk drawer.

Make sure the office refrigerator is cleaned out weekly by those who use it. Schedule Friday afternoons to pitch and purge and check that the temperature is set at 4 C (40 F) or colder.

Avoid stocking a grocery store in your desk drawer. A drawer full of goodies can attract pests and spoil in high temperatures when the office is closed. Keep a limited supply of non-perishable snacks like individually packaged almonds, energy bars, ready-to-go tuna and cracker kits, and single servings of canned fruit.

You may not have the luxury of a one-hour lunch break, but try taking 15 minutes to focus on eating your meal. And if possible, do it away from your desk.

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Message from the Risk Manager

The New Year has snuck up on me again. I can't believe it is 2008 and I'm already behind, as you can see by the late posting of this newsletter. I have to admit though, that I'm not exactly sad to see a new year; 2007 seemed to have more than the usual number of "challenges" and at times, I allowed myself to succumb to the pressure of daily worries. I'm hopeful that 2008 will be an improvement; I want to handle each day and situation better, regardless of the circumstances. To that end, I'm starting a personal "Count your Blessings" campaign. Not that I ever could (or would even want to) be one of those bubbly, perpetually perky people, but I am trying to take a few minutes each day to think about the good things in my life. The biggies come to mind: family, friends, job, home, etc.; but also being grateful for the little things like the first daffodil bloom, sound of rainfall hitting the roof, a purring kitten and so many other blessings that we neglect to even notice. Even in the worst circumstances, there are blessings to be found if we only take the time to look. I'm hoping that these few minutes will translate into an improved optimism that will allow me to better handle the daily challenges that come with home, work and just living. Care to join me?

Darlene

Safety Officer News and Notes

Desk Jockeys Beware

The average working environment can take a surprising toll on your health.

Most of us spend our working hours in environments we can't completely control, whether we're facing a cash register, a client, or a computer screen. And it's important to know that the little and not-so-little annoyances—from dry eyes to rushed lunches—can affect your health. If the prospect of Monday morning and another work day inspire a despairing moan, consider remedies other than quitting. Small adjustments can make a surprising difference in the quality of your day.

Here are five of the biggest office health challenges and the best ways to beat them:

1. Sights for Sore Eyes. According to a study reported in the Survey of Ophthalmology, computer users risk tired, red eyes, burning and blurred or double vision. People blink up to 60 percent less often while looking at the screen, causing dry-eye symptoms. The cornea is also sensitive to office hazards like dry air, airborne paper dust and ventilation fans. To protect yourself, look away from the screen and focus on a distant object at least every 30 minutes. Use eye drops if you feel strain. And if you wear reading glasses and work at a computer more than an hour a day, researchers recommend a pair of glasses especially designed for the distance you normally sit from the screen.

2. A Pain in the Back. Sitting too long in a badly designed office chair can provoke both acute and chronic back pain. So with that in mind, remember your ergonomics. Adjust the height of your chair and keyboard and the distance from the computer screen. Psychology also plays a big role in chronic pain; back pain can be a sign that you're bored or unhappy at work. If you've adjusted your workstation, try getting more exercise outside work to improve your mood.

3. Noises Off. A Cornell study found that even low-level noise in open-style offices results in more stress. After randomly assigning 40 experienced clerical workers to either a quiet, or a mildly noisy open-style office for three hours, the researchers measured and compared the amount of epinephrine, a stress hormone, for each worker. Those in the noisier office were both more stressed and less likely to make ergonomic adjustments to their workstation.

4. Desk-side Noshing. Eating out every day for lunch—or at your desk while distracted by e-mail and phone calls—tends to make you overeat and choose the wrong food. Try to brown-bag it and take enough time out so you can actually chew your food. And most importantly, stay far away from the desk with the candy dish or birthday cake. Studies show that the closer your proximity to those office snacks, the more likely you are to gain weight.

5. Bad Vibes. Americans are especially likely to be bullied at work, yet only one in three of the victims identified themselves as targets. So what exactly counts as bullying: "Persistent intimidating, malicious, insulting or exclusionary behavior?" Not only victims, but observers were more likely to report feeling stressed and dissatisfied with their jobs. Talking back to a bully typically aggravates the behavior. A better strategy is to alert superiors, and if you can join forces with coworkers and complain as a group, you're twice as likely to succeed.

Unplanned Safety Lesson

My wife and I were headed to Orlando. It was about 9:30 in the morning, and we were on I95 just a little south of Savannah. It was a clear day, and the road was dry. My wife was driving and she must have dozed off momentarily. When I saw her drifting toward the median I yelled and grabbed for the wheel, but it was already too late. I managed to bring the car back to the highway, but we lost control almost immediately and after cutting a few cookies in the middle of I95 we slammed into the median barrier at a high rate of speed. Somehow no other cars were involved, and our car's safety features performed great. The air bags worked, we were wearing our seat belts, and the crumple zones worked to perfection. The bottom line is that we were able to walk away with very minor injuries, rent a car and continue our vacation after a potentially fatal accident. Over a week after our accident, all we can think about is just how very lucky we were. The good lord was really looking out for us. As far as a lesson learned I'd have to say that highway fatigue is not something that is always obvious. It was the middle of the morning and we had stopped for gas and a soda only an hour before the accident. I had asked my wife at that time if she wanted me to drive and she assured me that she was fine. I guess our only indication of a potential problem was when she mentioned that she didn't sleep very well the night before. So just because you feel alert doesn't always mean that you are. Anyway, hopefully someone else may learn from our incident.

Safety Stories

Up Coming Events

Each program is advertised by Risk Management and is available to employees of Columbia County Board of Commissioners and the city employees of Grovetown and Harlem. Additionally, the Defensive Driving Courses may be attended by immediate family members of employees, on a space available basis, for a nominal fee.

Pre-registration is required.

For additional information or to register contact Risk Management. 706-312-7475

Safety Review Board **January 10, 2008**

Defensive Driving
Course – 8 hour **January 31, 2008**
 February 28, 2008
 March 20, 2008

Defensive Driving
Course – 4 hour **February 7, 2008**

CPR/AED/First Aid **January 15, 2008**

County Office Closed **January 1, 2008**
 January 21, 2008

Newsy Notes

Top 10 Most Common New Year Resolutions

- 1) Lose weight
- 2) Stop smoking
- 3) Stick to a budget
- 4) Save more money
- 5) Find a better job
- 6) Become more organized
- 7) Exercise more
- 8) Be more patient at work/with others
- 9) Eat better
- 10) Become a better person

JANUARY 2008

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FEBRUARY 2008

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MARCH 2008

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Happy New Year

