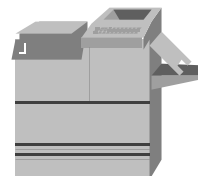


Fact Sheet No 3

Photocopiers: Safety Guidelines

Copying machines are used widely in offices at the University and include photocopiers, laser printers and fax machines. In general these machines may be operated without any detrimental effects to health if a few basic principles are followed. This fact sheet outlines several potential health hazards along with some recommended precautions that can be taken to reduce those risks.



Potential Hazards

The following hazards have been associated with office copying equipment:

Selenium and cadmium: the photoconductive material in copiers is usually selenium, although cadmium, sulphide, zinc oxide and organic polymers are also used. Trace amounts of these materials can become airborne where they can irritate the eyes, skin, throat and nasal passages.

Toner materials: toner dust released from photocopying machines does not generally present a health hazard though may irritate the nose and throat resulting in coughing and sneezing.

Heat: hot components of printers, copiers and faxes may cause burns during operations such as clearing paper misfeeds.

Light: fluorescent, metal halide or quartz exposure lamps are most commonly used in photocopiers. Eye damage has not been shown to be caused by photocopier use. Ultraviolet light does not pass through the document glass. Discomfort from the intensity of light may be avoided by closing the document cover or using the automatic document feeder.

Muscular fatigue: sustained and repetitive postures during continuous operation of copiers may lead to muscular fatigue.

Prevention of Injury or Illness

Supervisors and individual employees should ensure the following steps are taken:

- office copying machines must be installed in a well ventilated area to facilitate safe removal of any dust, gases or vapours;
- enclosed rooms containing high volume copiers must be equipped with mechanical ventilation;
- adequate space around copiers should be allowed for good ventilation and easy maintenance;
- copier should be located away from work desks to reduce noise to nearby workers and to ensure adequate ventilation;
- equipment should be regularly maintained;
- the working surface of the copier should be at a comfortable height for all operators;
- where necessary a collating table at a comfortable height should be provided; and
- employees must not be required to undertake photocopying and collating continuously for long periods.

Reference

University of Queensland, *Safety Guideline: Office Copying Machines*, Occupational Health and Safety Unit.



USQSafe Contact: Manager, USQSafe, ext 2194.

Disclaimer

These guidelines are for use within the University of Southern Queensland. This information is believed to be reliable and current. The University makes no guarantee and assumes no responsibility as to the absolute correctness of these procedures in all circumstances or for their suitability outside USQ.