Recommendations for Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) in an office environment

PPE is equipment worn by a worker to minimize exposure to specific occupational hazards. Hazards exist in every workplace so strategies to protect workers are essential.

Background:

Management Practices Questionnaire (MPQ) Part 1: Prevention, Question 11 asks, Is there a written personal protective equipment (PPE) program that:

i. Addresses your known work environment risks;
ii. You communicate to all workers and contractors;
iii. Documents your training on the use, care, and maintenance of PPE; and
iv. Specifies the basic PPE all workers and contractors must use?

PPE needs are specific to each worksite. The MPQ submissions indicated that the more industrial worksites and the healthcare facilities within the GNWT have PPE protocol and/or dress codes in place, but that the office work environments do not always have any PPE requirements.

Recommendation:

PPE recommendations for an office environment could include (covers points i. and iv.):

- Recommendations about foot wear when performing tasks such as lifting/carrying boxes or moving small equipment, i.e. closed-toes, no heels, etc.
- Have a box of Sterile Nitrile (non-latex) gloves near the photocopier for use when changing the toner.
- Recommendations about lanyard use, as many people carry keys and FOBs on a lanyard, i.e., the lanyard should have a quick release catch behind the neck to prevent strangulation.
- It is the expectation that employees dress appropriately for travel in cold weather and comply with any cold weather regulations set out by the transportation company.

The requirements can be met with:

- Signage in appropriate places.
- Reviewing recommendations at Safety Toolbox meetings on a regular schedule. As these meetings are documented, points ii. and iii. are covered.
- Including in orientation for new employees and/or contractors.

For more information about designing an effective PPE program, visit http://www.ccohs.ca/oshanswers/prevention/ppe/designin.html.