Safety Focused

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Presented by Acumen Insurance Solutions

Preventing Overexertion at Work

According to the National Safety Council, overexertion is the third-leading cause of injury in the United States—with an estimated 3.5 million overexertion injuries taking place each year. These injuries can happen in the workplace when you push your body beyond its physical limits during a task. Overexertion injuries are typically caused by one of these activities:

- **Physical labor**—This includes manual tasks that require extra force, such as lifting, pushing, pulling, carrying, gripping or using heavy tools.

- **Poor positioning**—This entails holding an awkward or stationary posture (e.g., sitting, bending, twisting or kneeling) for an extended period of time.

- **Repetitive motions**—This includes tasks in which the same movements or actions must be done repeatedly with minimal breaks, such as typing, stacking, packing or scanning.

Overexertion injuries usually make themselves known through soreness, burning, throbbing, swelling or even loss of function in the affected area. Ignoring these injuries can allow them to progress into painful, lifelong complications. That's why it's crucial to take steps to reduce your risk of overexertion at work. Use the following tips to help prevent such injuries:

- **Lift with caution.** If you need to lift anything at work, use safe techniques. Get a solid grip on the item you're lifting and hold it close to your body. Raise, carry and lower the item slowly and smoothly—never bend, reach or twist while lifting.

- **Practice proper ergonomics.** Set up your workstation in a way that prioritizes ergonomics and will keep you comfortable throughout the day.

- **Know your limits.** Don't force your body to do more than it can handle. Be sure to ask a co-worker for assistance if you aren't sure whether you can perform a task on your own.

If you experience an overexertion injury at work, tell your supervisor and seek medical attention right away.

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Tips for Avoiding Slips, Trips and Falls

Slips, trips and falls are prevalent risks for employees in any sector. In fact, recent data from the U.S. Department of Labor found that slips, trips and falls contribute to the majority of general industry accidents each year. Although these incidents usually only cause minor injuries, some slips, trips and falls can lead to serious complications—including sprains, strains, broken bones, spinal injuries and head injuries.

With this in mind, it's important for employees like you to take appropriate precautions to help limit the likelihood of slips, trips and falls within the workplace. Consider the following best practices:

- **Promote good housekeeping**. Keeping the workplace clean is critical to help protect both you and your co-workers from slips, trips and falls. After all, a cluttered work environment can easily contribute to dangerous floor conditions. Always clean up after yourself in the workplace by putting away equipment (including any attached cords or wires) in a safe, secure location when you are finished with it and disposing of all garbage correctly. If you make a mess (e.g., spilled liquids or dispersed debris), block off the area with appropriate warning signage and clean it up as quickly as possible.

- **Select safe footwear**. The type of shoes you wear in the workplace can make a major difference in preventing slips, trips and falls. Make sure you select slip-resistant, supportive footwear (e.g., clogs, boots or sneakers) for work, and always keep your shoelaces (if applicable) properly tied.

- **Slow down**. Avoid rushing through your work tasks, as this might lower your ability to notice potential hazards and increase your likelihood of injury. Work at a safe pace that allows you to take in all of your surroundings and pay attention to what's in front of you. Never run in the workplace.

- **Take extra precautions**. Be especially cautious and careful when working in areas with stairs, slippery or sticky floors, uneven ground or poor lighting—such hazards can significantly increase the risk of slips, trips and falls taking place.

If you have any additional questions regarding slip, trip and fall prevention in the workplace, talk to your supervisor.