Your role in reducing employee injuries at the University of Rochester

Maintenance of a safe work environment at the University requires everyone’s input. Many injuries are preventable; more often than not we have one or more opportunities to eliminate or reduce a hazard at work before someone gets hurt. To make this happen, safety must be a priority. When we value safety we find the time to make repair calls, remove tripping hazards or clean up spills. Well over 1000 employees reported injuries between January and September of this year. How many might have been prevented?

University of Rochester Injury Breakdown:
January - September 2010

Employee Falls
There are 3 major contributing factors to employee falls: ice, wet floors & tripping hazards. The majority of falls could be prevented if we all took action each & every time we recognize a fall hazard:

- Report icy conditions to the Snow Removal Hotline at 275-0000
- Clean up your own spill. Report wet slippery floors by calling the Facilities Customer Service Center at 273-4567
- Remove tripping hazards from walkways before someone falls. Cords are a major culprit here. Regardless of type (from computer mouse to vacuum cleaner) it’s up to you to keep the cord from tripping your co-worker.
Strains & Sprains
Musculoskeletal strains & sprains are typically the result of poor ergonomics. What you can do:

- Always use available lifting equipment
- Never pull when you can push
- If equipment is broken (like the wheels on a cart) take it out of service for repair
- Get help with large or heavy objects
- **Call Environmental Health & Safety (EHS) at 275-3241 & request an ergonomic assessment of your workstation**

Contusions
Common causes of contusions:

- You hit something (e.g. bumping your head on an overhead cabinet door)
- Something hits you (e.g. a carton falls off a shelf & hits your head or a stretcher rolls over your foot)
- Part of you gets caught between something (e.g. your finger is pinched in a closing door)

Some of these injuries can be avoided with planning (e.g. stack your shelves so that the carton isn’t poised to fall.) Others are a bit harder to anticipate, but it may help to remember that rushing is a significant factor. Many of these injury report descriptions begin with “I was in a hurry…”

Blood Exposures
This category primarily applies to patient care staff. The basics of prevention include:

- Consistent use of safety sharps
- Activating safety devices immediately after use (roughly 20% of needlesticks occur after the needle is used, how many could be avoided simply by activating the safety instantly after use?)
- Wear splash protection (theoretically all body fluid splashes are preventable if your mucous membranes are covered by personal protective equipment)
- Use good work practices (e.g. use a “safe zone”)
- Follow universal (i.e. standard) precautions

What’s the first step?
Know your resources & keep contact information handy:

- Facilities: x3-4567
- Snow & Ice: x5-0000
- EHS: x5-3241