



The Office of Compliance

The Office of Compliance (“OOC”) recognizes Fire Prevention Month. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (“BLS”), 20% of multiple-fatality incidents in the workplaces across America involved fires and explosions. The BLS also reported fire and explosion deaths in the workplace increased between 2009 and 2010 and fires and explosions accounted for 4% of all fatalities that occurred in the workplace. Within the Congressional workplace itself, there are many workspaces that have higher risks of electrical and fire hazards, such as kitchen facilities, workshops, and electrical installations. Electrical and fire hazards continue to be the top two safety concerns in the Congressional workplace. Many electrical hazards can turn into fires if not addressed immediately.

Common fire hazards that have been found on inspection of the Capitol complex are:

- Improper storage of flammables
- Combustibles stored in electrical closets
- Heaters with no tip-over protection
- Overloading circuits
- Use of wall and window coverings that are not flame resistant
- Unattended open flame such as candles
- Electrical equipment that is not certified by a Nationally Tested Laboratory
- Stacking combustibles too close to electrical circuits or light fixtures
- Not shutting off appliances in kitchen areas that are prone to creating fires
- Smoking in highly flammable areas such as places where fuel and gases are stored or dispensed, or near battery charging areas



Section 215 of the Congressional Accountability Act (“CAA”) requires that public areas and Congressional workspaces be free of recognized hazards that are likely to cause death or serious injury. The Office of Compliance administers the provisions of the CAA and enforces the Occupational Safety and Health Act (“OSHAct”) in the Legislative Branch. Covered employing offices are required to comply with these workplace safety requirements.

A covered employee or employing office may submit to the OOC a “Request for Inspection” to determine if an unsafe working condition exists. If he or she so chooses, a covered employee may elect to remain anonymous when requesting such an inspection. A “Request for Inspection” form can be obtained from the OOC website or by visiting the Agency. Once such a request is filed, the General Counsel of the OOC is responsible for investigating the suspected unsafe working condition.

If you know or suspect a safety or health hazard in a Congressional work space, please contact the OOC at (202) 724-9250 or visit www.compliance.gov for more information.