

Office Safety



FIG 15-3 —Case history Vice president was talking to a customer at his desk. The slight movement of the chair as he sat down caused a caster to come out of its socket, man fell to the floor. Result midback fracture, collapsed vertebrae, and 9 months lost time

manufacturers, in a survey made by the American Mutual Insurance Alliance

In the bar chart, Fig 15-2, leading accident types, based on results of both the California and the Equitable studies, are compared with types suffered by other injured industrial workers as reported in California for the same year of the office accident survey

Although the severity rate was not given in the California study, 26 work-connected deaths were reported. It was not surprising to see that eight of these deaths were recorded from injuries sustained in work-connected automobile accidents. (The others were in categories not subject to control by a company safety program, such as death on public transportation.)

If the fatality figure is extrapolated to cover the estimated 25 million office workers in the U.S., 300 to 400 deaths would be caused each year by office accidents. Of these, 150 to 200 deaths per year may occur from work-connected automobile accidents alone, a category that can be controlled by a good office "defensive driving" safety program, such as that developed by N S C

Complacency—prime cause of injury

Office injuries may seem to be inconse-

quential because they lack dramatic impact. A really spectacular accident is rare, and when it occurs, it is usually the employee's own fault. Approximately three-fourths of office injuries are caused by unsafe acts of the victims.

Factory injuries, on the other hand, are often regarded as being partly the result of unsafe conditions that should have been corrected. Management, therefore, feels partly responsible and is more strongly motivated to correct the causes of factory injuries than of office injuries.

The person who is injured when he falls off his chair (Fig 15-3) seems to merit little sympathy or attention. The picture of an office worker slipping and crashing to the floor on his buttocks seems amusing. The picture of a factory worker with his hand crushed in a machine is horrifying.

But who is likely to be absent from work the longer? The office worker who sustains a severe compression fracture of one or more lumbar vertebrae from a bad fall, or the man whose hand is amputated?

Complacency—the attitude that office accidents do not amount to much—is one of the prime causes of office accidents. The average office worker gives little thought to