

OSHA Concerns When Buying Or Building Office Or Retail Space

Insights

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Location and price generally control office-space decisions. Even if you construct a new building or do extensive build-out, you probably have not devoted much consideration to whether your new space meets OSHA requirements.

It's an office, after all – not a manufacturing plant or refinery. So you rely on your builder or landlord for that. You figure that they're well-regarded contractors and developers, so presumably they adhered to OSHA requirements along with local ordinances and electrical codes.

Unfortunately, OSHA standards mainly focus on employees working safely, and contractors don't view the standards as dictating the final structure. Thus, contractors follow OSHA construction standards to protect workers building the structure, but they don't really think about OSHA standards applicable to the finished structure in the same way that they faithfully adhere to National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) standards such as 70E or state or local building codes. Your building might be structurally sound and safely wired, but don't be surprised if you discover a missing mid rail on a stairway or missing knock-outs in electric cabinets and fixtures.

Problems Continue When You Take Possession

Another concern is the mindset of many people working in an office environment. Because these workers don't face the safety challenges associated with heavy manufacturing, office employees and managers don't continuously focus on evaluating the hazards associated with the task and how to avoid those hazards.

Anyone will be alert in front of a roaring furnace hearth or the clattering mechanism of a press, but most of us are not so alert when braving the cubicle jungle. We just don't catch the violations. Therefore, there may be more hazards, or at least more OSHA compliance issues, in the finished office setting than one might expect.

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