

The SSA-5510 Line by Line

Important: This was written under the 2000 contract, when the inspections were joint inspections. Unless it is rewritten keep in mind you can use this as a check on what management should do/has done.

Many of the questions on the SSA-5510 come from national standards or regulations. (Questions in egress in Section A are from OSHA standards, fire protection standards in Section B come from NFPA 101, Life Safety Code.) SSA's policy is that given conflicting standards the stricter one applies.

NOTE:

1. Since the last inspection has there been a Shelter-In-Place drill?
2. Has the Shelter-In-Place kit been inspected for expiration dates, water, working radios, etc.?

The inspection is a ~~man~~agement inspection.

| | | |
|--|---------------------------|----------------------------|
| From: AM-04210 | Annual Security Reminders | Effective Date: 12/27/2004 |
| Each fiscal year, more than forty offices undergo reviews by the Office of the Inspector General and the accounting firms of Deloitte & Touche and PricewaterhouseCoopers. In their findings, the auditors report that between 10 and 20 per cent of the offices reviewed failed to comply with at least some of SSA guidelines. In an effort to increase compliance with current policy and procedures, we have prepared this list of reminders relevant to the more common findings associated with the audits: | | |

The comment above is taken directly from the Administrative Message. (Emphasis added). Relevant comments from the AM are in the section they mention.

NON SSA-5510 QUESTION ITEMS

The SSA-5510 is not all inclusive. Just because there is no question on something does not mean it doesn't concern us. Every section has an "other" block, use it.

GENERAL:

References:

- Authority for the SSA-5510 is found in the *General Administration Manual*. AIMS Chapter 13 has excellent information on Health and Safety. The Agency's own instructions call for the health and safety inspection to be done twice a year. If the manager isn't interested in doing it he's bucking the Agency, not the Union.
- OSHA standards can be found in 29CFR parts 1900 – 1910. The [OSHA website](#) has very good search and index capability. When searching there be sure to look at the interpretations as well as the regulations.
- Your region's Health and Safety person can provide help, advice and references.
- You also can contact the National Health and Safety committee members:
- Howard Egerman: howard.egerman@ssa.gov 7200 Bancroft Ave, Suite 263, Oakland CA 94605 (510) 273-4003 (Pacific time)
- Andy Poulos: Andrew.poulos@ssa.gov 211 Station Road, 5th Floor, Minneola, NY 11501-4226 (516) 747-1605 (Eastern Time)
- Virginia (Ginny) Harris: Mary V Harris@ssa.gov, 10503 Timberwood Circle Suite 50 Louisville KY 40223 (502) 425-8663 ext 202 (Central Time)

Useful Things

There are some things you may find helpful. I have these available when I do a health and safety inspection:

- A 6' tape measure, for checking aisle widths
- A neon night light (the kind with a dim glow, not a regular bulb as those burn out easily) for testing GFI plugs
- A pair of 4 power binoculars (any low power will work, mine cost about \$10 – helps when checking for

the condition of a roof or examining weather seal on windows with heavy shrubbery in front of them – where you can't get close enough to the window to see the seal easily.

- A microwave leakage test card (found at places such as Lowe's, a home improvement store)
- A cut off section of broomstick (flat on one end, slightly pointed on the other), about 4 feet long – I use it to push test buttons on emergency lights or exit signs. That way I don't have to carry a ladder around the office.

The SSA-5510 is a checklist. Begin by looking at the last page and reviewing the items on it.

Any "no" answers should be annotated with any corrective actions taken. Corrected on the spot (COTS) is a good annotation – means the problem was taken care of as soon as it was found.

Item 2 (reports of non-compliance) may also be picked up in D-23 (any violation cited since the last inspection).

Item 4 (prior SSA-5510) is essential – if you don't have it, get a copy from the manager. It will assist you in insuring items have been corrected.

Item 5 (written reports of unsafe practices/conditions) Most likely employees will be the source of these complaints- i.e. they will generate them. Ask the manager if he/she has received any complaints. Also check with the employees to see if they have concerns, but haven't submitted them in writing. Prior SSA-5510s also can be considered written reports.

OSHA form 200 is now form 600

- security incidents are reported on form SSA-3114, not on the OSHA form 600 unless an injury is involved

| | | |
|---|---------------------------|----------------------------|
| From: AM-04210 | Annual Security Reminders | Effective Date: 12/27/2004 |
| · Incident reports are required to be filed within 2 workdays of the occurrence. Electronic versions of Form SSA-3114-U4 are available on DCFAM's Office of Facilities Management website on the SSA Intranet at http://ssahost.ba.ssa.gov/ofmairep/cfair/index.cfm (AIMS GAM 12.07.03). | | |

HAZCOM BINDER - The binder should not be in manager's office, it should be where employees can find it easily. It should have the Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS) sheets for chemicals used in the office. It should be current.

INDOOR AIR QUALITY:

In the past Carbon Dioxide (CO₂) levels over 1000 parts per million (PPM) have been mistakenly used as an absolute standard for maximum permissible level. In fact 5000 PPM is the standard for an 8 hour exposure (as you'd get in working in a plant where CO₂ is generated.)

The 1000-PPM CO₂ "standard" was actually a misinterpretation of an ASHRAE recommendation, it was not a standard. There is no indoor air quality standard saying CO₂ over XXXX PPM is a health hazard. High levels of CO₂, however, are an indicator of poor air circulation and improper ventilation.

CO₂ over 1000 PPM is not grievable as a health hazard per se. It is, however, grievable as an indicator of poor air circulation and improper ventilation. Additionally, you can file an OSHA complaint.

The correct indicator is that CO₂ should not be more than 700 PPM **higher than** the PPM of the outside air (e.g.: if the outside air is 450 PPM & inside reading is 1100 PPM, the difference is less than 700 PPM over the outside air (450 + 700 =1150) thus it is not, absent other indications, an indicator of poor air quality.

At least during your first inspection find out these things:

- Where are the air filters located? If they are in the air handling units they will filter both incoming and inside air at the same time. If they are in the return air ducts then the air intakes will also need filters.
- How often are the filters changed? Who changes them? When was the last time they were changed?
- You may want to actually look at the air handling units particularly if they are on the roof. Condensate from them shouldn't be draining directly on the roof (the air handling units should have a drain), Water should not be standing on the roof (if the air handlers are up there they will suck up whatever is growing in that water).

IVT ROOMS –

- Are aisle width requirements (minimum widths, including handicapped access) met?
- Cable management
- Air quality

- Emergency lighting
- If used for long term IVT training:
- Ergonomic furniture (chairs at a minimum, preferably height adjustable tables as well – these can be manually adjustable.) Check the MOU for the office move/renovation. Frequently it will specify adjustable tables here.
- Are CPUs under the monitor (The monitor probably will be too high if the work surfaces are at writing height), if it is alongside is there adequate workspace for books, note taking, and written work?
- If the CPUs are on the table do they block view of the instructor or TV?
- If the CPU is on the floor/under the table check for foot room and cable management
- Also, check these periodically, particularly when classes are in session, to make sure these are being maintained.

SECURITY ACTION PLAN AND OFFICE EMERGENCY PLAN

- Employees have to know about certain parts of the SAP. The most common method of doing this is to post it where the employees have access to it. Make sure they do.
- Stock answer to "is XX posted" is "yes, in the SAP" -- check to make sure the information is in the SAP.
- Things like CPR certification (because it has an expiration date) - suggest separate posting with expiration dates
- The SAP is supposed to be updated at least once a year as well as when the office situation changes (renovations, people transfer in and out, get promoted, retire, any changes at all). **Make sure it is up to date, and that people listed in it are still there:** one office listed a "hall monitor" who had transferred to another office 10 miles away

GENERAL SSA-5510 ITEMS

Answer all questions! If you deliberately leave one unanswered annotate why.

Managers will sometimes tell you that we don't rent stairwells, hallways and the like, so SSA isn't responsible for them. *Not so.* If our people use it, we inspect it. We don't rent the parking lot or walkways around the building, but the SSA-5510 specifically calls for those to be inspected. SSA may not rent the stairwells, hallways or other means of getting into or out of our offices, but if it is a part of our route in or out *we inspect it.*

Since we don't rent contact station space (it is donated) we can't enforce compliance on the donor. The standards in the 5510 still apply to it, and we can inspect it. We can, under the general safety clauses, file grievances if the Agency sends our employees into unsafe or unhealthy working places. On December 14, 1997 the agency issued a Partnership Agreement entitled *Contact Station and OHA Remote Hearing Site Security*, covering contact stations. This document is available in the files section of the Yahoo Group 3509_H-S (www.groups.yahoo.com, do a search on 3509)

Generally your answers should be consistent. If you've marked N/A to **A-8** (exit stairways) probably **A-17** (handrails permit sliding of hands) will be N/A also, since stairways are usually where handrails are located. Likewise, if **B-1** (fire alarm system) is no, probably **B-13** (fire alarm pull boxes) will be no. *This doesn't mean that you can't have one without the other, it just means if you mark one "no" and the other "yes" you mean it and explain why you've done it.*

Give enough details so that you, or someone else, can identify whether or not there has been a change (for better or worse) since the last inspection. Except **D23** (any incidents since the last inspection) an answer marked "**no**" needs detail.

Be very specific and give details: not "fire extinguishers need servicing" but "fire extinguishers last serviced October 1955" – if the inspections expired last week it is not as flagrant a violation as if it were last year.

For example: which Exit sign has burned out bulbs? Identify it as the Exit sign by the stockroom, employee entrance, etc. This helps on the next inspection when you can check and tell if it is the same sign that is burned out. If you've marked **D6** (inappropriate storage of material on top of file cabinets, bookcases etc.) as a **no** then identify how bad the problem is: a few files, boxes of inactive files, active files....

QUESTION SPECIFIC COMMENTS:

EMERGENCY EGRESS

A-1 (two separate ways to exit) This means at least two separate ways out of the office. Two doors that lead to the same vestibule are only one exit way. (GAM 13.04.09 Attachment A, Section A.3)

A-2 (exits as remote as possible) This shouldn't ever be a "no". If it is find out what plans management has to deal with the possibility that the exit is blocked by fire, building collapse or other disaster situation. (GAM 13.04.09

Attachment A.4)

A-3 (exit aisles maintained according to page 6) Use a tape measure to check clearances. The standards permit choke points in some places. Make sure that these *minimum* standards are met. Restrictions can be caused by permanent obstructions (walls, pillars), semi-permanent ones (partitions, cubicles) and temporary ones (boxes of folders waiting shipment, mail carts not being used to deliver mail). Always do this the first time you do an office. After that, unless something changes you don't need to do it (unless you're checking to see if a problem has been solved.)

A-4 (exit aisles arranged in clear direct pattern) There shouldn't be any dead end paths that look like a way out. The maximum dead end path, according to OSHA/NFPA 101 is 20 feet. The path out shouldn't be too convoluted. If the office is a rabbit warren it needs directional signs in addition to the signs needed by **A-6**.

A-5 (emergency lighting)

| | | |
|---|---------------------------|----------------------------|
| From: AM-04210 | Annual Security Reminders | Effective Date: 12/27/2004 |
| Internal rooms are to be equipped with emergency lighting to decrease the risk of harm to employees in the event of a power outage (AIMS MRM.04.50.05). | | |

Also, from AIMS: MRM.04.50.05 K.1:

K. Lighting

1. The office must have emergency lighting that provides sufficient illumination for personnel to safely exit during a power outage. (It is not meant to provide adequate illumination to continue working.) Enclosed rooms such as the multi-purpose room, storage room, restrooms, etc., must have battery operated emergency lighting or flashlights to allow safe egress. Emergency exits must be adequately illuminated to facilitate emergency egress. Exits other than ground floor main entrances must be marked with illuminated exit signs (see AIMS,GAM,SSA.g:13.04, Attachment A). The emergency lighting must be tested monthly and the results recorded (see AIMS,GAM,SSA.g:12.06,Security Action Plan).

This question is confusing. If a building meets any/all of the criteria (3 stories, over 1000 people, 100 or more above/below grade) it **must** have emergency lights. Most of our offices don't meet that criteria, but do have the emergency lights. **There isn't any place else to record inspection of emergency lighting, so use this question for all offices**, even those that are one story buildings.

You'd do it this way:

Yes -- lights are present, have been tested and all work

No -- lights are present, have been tested, some/all don't work, or have other problems (explain in the remarks section)

N/A -- building does not meet the criteria and there aren't any emergency lights present, with a note in the remarks section that there are no emergency lights.

The agency is putting emergency lighting in all buildings so it needs to be checked. The only time this question should be N/A is if it really doesn't have emergency lighting.

| | | |
|---|---------------------------|----------------------------|
| From: AM-04210 | Annual Security Reminders | Effective Date: 12/27/2004 |
| Internal rooms are to be equipped with emergency lighting to decrease the risk of harm to employees in the event of a power outage (AIMS MRM.04.50.05). | | |

Based on the AM *all* internal rooms in SSA offices should have emergency lighting. If your office has rooms (bathrooms, stock rooms, IVT room, etc.) that don't have emergency lighting cite it as a deficiency, work to get them added.

If there are deficiencies (bulbs burned out, etc) mark as a "no". Make sure that all bulbs/lights in each fixture are working (most emergency lights have two). Before answering this check the lease -- most buildings built for SSA require 1/2 foot-candles of light through the exit path. Even if the buildings are only one story if the lease calls for emergency lighting the landlord has to provide it. Only mark N/A if it isn't present and isn't called for in the lease.

When checking the emergency lighting hold down the test button for *at least one minute*. What you are doing is cutting the battery out of the power line and running the light on battery power. If it won't burn even a minute it won't do any good when it is needed. (The lights are supposed to burn for 1 ½ hours. (NFPA 101, Life Safety Code 5-9.1.2)

There are at least two types of emergency lights. Some offices will have a mix of both kinds. One type is the brick, with spotlights on the wall or ceiling. These are easy to see, and are common in older offices. In

newer offices some of the fluorescent lights serve as emergency lights. These are harder to find. You must look at each light fixture. The ones that are also emergency lights will have a test button and pilot light (sometimes in the center of the fixture, more often at one end.). The easiest, and most dramatic, way to test/find them is to cut the power off at the breaker box. This will find all of the working ones, but you'll still have to check all of the others to see if there are any non-working emergency lights. (The first time you search out emergency light locations make a map showing where they are. Next time you do this you won't have to search.)

If the building has emergency lights make sure they are in place where they are needed. Ask yourself where people are apt to be and if the power goes out will they need light to get out? Thus the stockrooms, IVT room, etc. all need emergency lighting.

A6. (exits identified with signs) This question should never be **N/A**. Our offices have walls separating the work area from the reception area. The door through that wall will need a sign. Secondary exits (employee entrances etc.) will need a sign also. If you have to go through other rooms they should be marked as well. If you have to go into the stock room to get to the employee entrance then the stockroom door will need an exit sign as well. (GAM 13.04.09 Attachment A, Section A10).

The exit signs should be placed where they are visible. If there is an exit in the wall of a hallway the exit sign needs to be at right angles to the direction of travel down the hall. A sign mounted parallel to the wall won't do any good.

Many exit signs have a test button. The same one minute **use** test should be applied to "exit" signs with test buttons (for the same reason you test emergency lighting). Make sure that all bulbs/lights in each exit sign are working (most exit signs have two lights burning at the same time.).

The most common configuration of battery backed up lights is to have four bulbs. Two operate on line power, two on the battery. (There may be a small light with a label like "line" or "power". It should be on when the sign is connected to power and off when it is running on battery.)

When you push the test button it disconnects the sign from line power. It should switch to battery power. You should see the two powered lights go off and two battery-powered lights come on. If present the "power" light should go off. If these don't happen the exit sign is defective and needs repair/replacement. (Sometimes the line power lights will stay on; the battery powered lights come on. Either way you should see a change when you push the test button. If you don't see a change consider the light defective and list it.)

Again, from AIMS: Emergency exits must be adequately illuminated to facilitate emergency egress. Exits other than ground floor main entrances must be marked with illuminated exit signs (see AIMS,GAM,SSA.g:13.04, Attachment A). The emergency lighting must be tested monthly and the results recorded (see AIMS,GAM,SSA.g:12.06,Security Action Plan).

A-7 (when occupied are exits free of locks, etc.) Nothing should interfere with easy exit in a panic situation. The door must be capable of being opened without using a key – thumb latches, panic bars and the like permit this *as long as they work*. One office installed an automatic door opener for a wheelchair-using employee. When they did this the panic bar was disabled. The only way the door could be opened was by pushing the activating button. OSHA cited them (29 CFR 1910.36(b)(4) because the free and unobstructed egress from the area was blocked. (GAM 13.04.09 Attachment A, Sections B3, 5, 6)

A-8 (exit stairways clean, free of storage, etc.) Free and unobstructed egress – nothing should block use of the stairway. (GAM 13.04.09 Attachment A, Section B2)

A-9 (doors serving 50 or more swing in travel direction) When checking this assume maximum occupancy, including staff and clients/customers. (GAM 13.04.09 Attachment A, Section B1)

A10 (evacuation drill) Unless you are doing a surprise inspection there's no reason for this to be a "no" answer. Management knew you were coming, if they didn't bother to do an evacuation drill it may be a sign of deeper problems. Check this office carefully. If they have trouble remembering when it was done ask to see the report required by Attachment D in GAM 11.02.10.

We are also supposed to be having Shelter In Place Drills. Record them here as well as the evacuation drills.

| | | |
|---|---------------------------|----------------------------|
| From: AM-04210 | Annual Security Reminders | Effective Date: 12/27/2004 |
| · Emergency evacuation routes are to be posted in the office. Evacuation drills are to be conducted semi-annually, or as often as required by local ordinances, whichever is more frequent. The results of the drills are to be recorded in the PSAP (AIMS MRM:04.50.05). | | |

A-11 (fire emergency procedures) This training should be done yearly. Many offices do it in conjunction with the inspection of the fire extinguishers. Most fire departments are delighted to come out and give a fire safety talk and even train on the use of extinguishers with real, hands on training.

A12 (phones have emergency numbers) – This should never be a repeat violation since all they have to do to correct it is put a sticker with emergency numbers on a phone. Everyone knows about 9-1-1, but the contract and AIMS GAM calls for phones to be labeled. If the phone system requires dialing a special number have the labels show it e.g.: 9-911. People forget the most obvious things in an emergency, so have them labeled. Also suggest labeling management (or all) phones with the FPS number. If the manager needs it he won't have time to look it up

| | | |
|--|---------------------------|----------------------------|
| From: AM-04210 | Annual Security Reminders | Effective Date: 12/27/2004 |
| · In localities where dialing 911 is not used to summon assistance, emergency telephone numbers (FPS, police, fire department, etc.) must be posted at each workstation (AIMS MRM 04.50.05.D). | | |

A-13 (exit discharge directly to street, etc.) This doesn't mean that each exit door has to lead directly to the open area. The exit route has to lead to it – a courtyard completely enclosed by the building wouldn't qualify. (GAM 13.04.09 Attachment A, Section B11).

A-14 (not pass through high hazard area) Most likely this will be **N/A**, since we don't have paint shops, welding areas and the like in our work areas.

A-15 (EXIT signs have arrows where needed) The need for this is most common when the EXIT sign is at right angles to the door, or if the door leads to a hallway, where you need to know which way to turn. Most EXIT signs have blanks that can be removed, adding an arrow to the sign if it is needed. (GAM 13.04.09 Attachment A, Section B10).

A-16 (handicapped employees enter and exit safely) If the second exit out of the office is a stairwell how will a wheelchair user get out? (Assume the first exit is blocked) There are emergency wheelchairs with straps to hold a person in. Does the office have one? What plans has management made for this contingency? Make sure there is nothing stored in the stairwell (paint, boxes, whatever) which would interfere with free egress.

A-17 (handrail allow sliding of hands) The most common injury in a stairwell is a fall, even in non-emergency situations. Make sure people don't have to remove their hands from the railing.

A-18 (other) **Use this to expand any comments or record problems that don't fit in other sections.**

FIRE PROTECTION – PREVENTION

B-1 (Fire alarm system in working condition) If the office doesn't have an alarm/sprinkler system this is **N/A**. If it does have one check the inspection record. If management doesn't have a copy the building manager (multi tenant buildings) should. Local codes/ordinances can affect whether a building has one. The fire department can tell you if your building requires it (you may need to know the built date or the occupancy dates). Sometimes codes permit grandfathering, where existing buildings don't have to meet new code requirements.)

B-2 (extinguishers placed & selection criteria) Make sure *no* halon or carbon tetrachloride fire extinguishers are in the office. They are not authorized for use: they can kill anyone who uses them. Halon and carbon tetrachloride extinguishers put out fires by replacing the oxygen in the room – not a good thing if you are in there. SSA's policy is that we use A-B-C extinguishers everywhere. (The SSA-5510 hasn't been updated lately. It lists specifications for the placement of pressurized water (class A fires only). The space allocation standard MOU, as amended in 1997, calls for all extinguishers to be ABC type. If you find an extinguisher that isn't an ABC type it needs to be replaced. If it is an A type (wood/paper) extinguisher near electrical equipment it should be replaced immediately. (Electrical equipment is everywhere in our offices, so it is almost certain that the extinguisher needs replacement immediately.) The manager can call Field Services in Atlanta and request replacement.

The first time you visit an office pace off the distance to make sure *every part* of the office is protected by at least one extinguisher. Do it again if there are any renovations or rearrangements between visits.

B-3 (additional extinguishers for data processing room) ABC extinguishers are required for data processing rooms. The same placement criteria apply to these as any other extinguisher. It can be in the room, near the entry door. It is better to have it outside the room as it can be reached without going past burning equipment.

B-4 (extinguishers mounted/marked/charged) Make sure the fire extinguisher signs are present and visible. This usually means contrasting color with the wall and mounted high on the wall. The idea isn't to tell people what a fire extinguisher is (the way botanical gardens will label plants with the scientific name of the plant), but to mark

them conspicuously: that way someone not familiar with the office and its extinguisher locations can find them in an emergency situation. The signs need to be up high so they can be seen above the furniture, people, and panels in the office.

When extinguishers are located inside of rooms off the main office area they should be located near the entrance to the room. That way you don't have to go into the burning room to get to the extinguisher.

Likewise they should *never* be behind machines or anything else. The most common SSA fires are electrical fires, if the extinguishers are behind burning equipment they won't do any good.

B-5 (extinguishers inspected and tagged) There are two sets of dates to be concerned with.

The extinguishers will have tags on them. The tags are marked (often with a punch) to show when the extinguisher company last inspected them. The inspection is good for one year from the marked date. On the back of the tag there is a place for recording a monthly visual inspection (checking to make sure that it is still properly mounted, the pin is in place, the pressure gauge is still in the green, that the hose hasn't dry rotted or become plugged.). Frequently managers don't realize that they need to do this.

Somewhere on the extinguisher, frequently on the bottom, there is a date. Six years after the date the extinguisher must be discharged and refilled even if not used. Twelve years after that date it must be pressure tested. These tests will be marked on it.

B-6 (flammables stored in metal containers), **10** (flammable use areas ventilated), **14** (flammable containers marked) – Usually flammable liquids are not a problem in SSA offices. We don't have paint shops or the like in our buildings. Small quantities of toner or other liquids require reasonable care; they don't have to be segregated from other supplies in a special locker, but they should be in a metal cabinet of some sort.

B-7 (food preparation appliances controlled) Mainly are they turned off/unplugged when not in use? Untended appliances can malfunction and start fires. There have been reports that plasticizers, chemicals which keep plastics soft & flexible (like plastic wrap or water bottles) will leach into food or water when they are heated or frozen – so when someone heats food in plastic wrap or freezes water in a plastic (soft, flexible) bottle they are adding unwanted non-food chemicals to their meal or drink. This is unproven – see <http://www.snopes.com/toxins/plastic.htm> . To be completely safe use glass to heat things, use ice cubes to chill water.

B-8 (Disposal facilities for cigarettes) While we don't permit smoking in our offices we still have employees and claimants/customers who continue to smoke. The areas outside the buildings, where they smoke, need to have receptacles for cigarette butts to prevent litter.

B-9 (On-Off timers prohibited) While it is nice to come to work and have the coffeepot switch itself on, it isn't safe. The timer can activate prematurely, or on weekends or holidays.

B-11 (fire extinguisher training) The Security Action Plan (SAP) should list these people. Check to make sure it does and that they have had the annual training.

B-12 (alarm audible?)

Before you test any alarm system make sure you/management/employees know how to shut it off. Employees, as well as management, need to know how to shut the alarm off in case it is accidentally tripped or a child plays with it and sets it off.

Many offices have some sort of alarm for fire. Check to make sure it works and can be heard over the general background noise in the office. The office may have a light that comes on or flashes instead of a sound maker. Check it to make sure it works, regardless of the time, even if there are customers in the office. If the office has handicapped employees make sure the office has a suitable alarm for them (e.g.: deaf persons need strobe lights or other visible alarms). Note if the office doesn't have it. This is a grievable item.

Use this question to check out panic alarms: alarms at the front desk, individual portable alarms, and the like, even though they aren't used for fire purposes. If the office has the old style alarm (a doorbell button and a buzzer or ringing bell) suggest that it be replaced with a chime doorbell -- an angry claimant might be set off by an obvious alarm, but would be unlikely to feel threatened by an "Avon Calling" chime.

Some offices have a silent alarm -- an alarm which rings at FPS or at the local police department, but which does not ring in the office. Check that type of alarm too. The manager needs to call the monitoring agency to alert them that it will be tested. Also call back after the test to make sure they received the right number of alarms – one for each location tested. Also make sure the alarm received was the appropriate type. In one office the reception counter panic alarm button triggered as a burglar alarm. Since the office was open at the time FPS took it as a system malfunction.

Make sure that any push buttons that have to be pressed to trigger an alarm do **not** involve leaning *toward* the claimant, if they do have them moved.

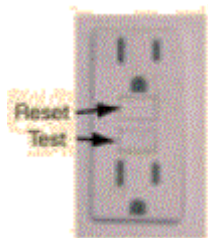
| | | |
|--|---------------------------|----------------------------|
| From: AM-04210 | Annual Security Reminders | Effective Date: 12/27/2004 |
| · Duress alarms must be installed at each reception window and interviewing station. These systems should be tested twice a year (AIMS MRM.50.05). | | |
| · The Intrusion Detection System alarm and panic alarms are to be tested semi-annually and documented in the Physical Security Action Plan (PSAP) (AIMS MRM 04.50.04 and MRM 04.55). | | |

B-13 (Fire alarm pull boxes inspected) If the office doesn't have an alarm/sprinkler system this is N/A. If it does have one, check the inspection record. If management doesn't have a copy the building manager (multi-tenant buildings) should.

B-15 (other) Use this to expand any comments or record problems that don't fit in other sections.

ELECTRICAL

C-1 (3 prong plugs in 3 prong outlets) Not much of a problem now, mostly this will need to be checked in old buildings. If the building doesn't have three prong outlets everywhere do check that proper adapters are installed.



If there are electrical outlets in bathrooms and sink areas of the break room they should be protected with GFCI (Ground Fault Circuit Interrupt) outlets. They look different from a regular electrical outlet. They are rectangular and have two buttons on them, a test and reset button (see picture). These should be tested during inspections. When the test button is pushed there should be a crack or pop sound and the outlet (and anything further along on the circuit should go dead – one GFCI outlet can protect other outlets.) There may only be one GFCI for both employee restrooms. Pressing the reset button should restore power throughout the circuit. (A nightlight is a good way to test these).

C-2, (refrigerators etc away from wet) **C-4**, (cut off switch locations) **C-10**, (guards for moving parts) & **C-13** (portable electric tools) These probably will not apply to our offices. If the kitchen area is damp, or has exposed water pipes or other hazards you'll pick that up elsewhere. None of our machines have emergency cut off switches (as opposed to on/off). The guards referred to in question 10 are belt guards or blade guards. Most of our machinery is not inherently dangerous the way a table saw is (EXCEPTION: paper cutters have blade guards, many of our offices have paper cutters. It's a matter of preference, but these probably can be marked N/A.

C-3 (use of employee appliances controlled and appliances turned off) Is there a procedure to make sure that the coffeepot is turned off before the office closes? (Is the sunshine fund/coffee committee, etc. tasked with turning off/unplugging the pot?)? (The most common appliance problem)

C-5 (Visible wires, cords etc. in good condition) **C-6** (Extension cords prohibited, except for work equipment) **C-7** (extension cords in good condition), **C-15** (Not over 8 feet) SSA offices traditionally are under wired -- there aren't enough outlets, so extension cords proliferate. Check extension cords, not only for the obvious fraying, breaks and other flaws, also check for capacity. Household extension cords (the kind where the cord is the same as a lamp cord) cannot carry large amounts of electricity. If a regular cord is used it can overheat and cause a fire (electrical fires are the most common fire in SSA offices). If the cord still has a tag with its rating you can read how much electricity it can handle. All machines will tell you the amount of electricity they use. If the machine needs more power than the cord can supply it is a fire hazard and needs to be replaced immediately. If there is no tag you can check the cord by feel. Have the machine run (for example make photocopies) for a while, so the machine is using power, then feel the extension cord - if it is warm to the touch it's power rating has been exceeded. (Obviously the cord will pass the test if the machine isn't being used and isn't drawing electricity. Make sure the test goes on long enough to actually stress the power cord). The longer a power cord is the bigger it has to be to compensate for resistance.

One of the files at the www.groups.yahoo.com 3509_H-S site shows how to calculate power cord size. Take a look at it.

In areas where people can walk or put their feet, flat power cords (the kind you can walk on) are preferred over round ones. A regular heavy-duty extension cord, even if taped down isn't appropriate. The tape removes the tripping hazard, but extension cords aren't made for foot traffic. Adapters (or shields) to put over a cord, to protect it can be purchased separately at office supply stores.

If the office has to have a lot of power cords discuss with the manager the possibility of adding extra circuits and outlets.

C-8 (employee appliances tested by UL) We assume an appliance we buy is safe because UL and other testing labs check for safety problems. If employee owned appliances still have the UL tag you can check this. If they have been removed look at the appliance. Does it appear to have been modified or does it look homemade? At a minimum it should look like something you can buy, with no obvious safety problems.

C-9 (electrical repairs made by competent personnel) Just because Joe knows how to wire his house doesn't mean that he should

work on stuff in the office. It is his house and his life he risks if he's wrong at home. At work it's your life he risks if he's wrong.

C-11 (electrical receptacles in good condition and securely fastened) **Basic good construction:** any outlets should be fastened to the wall, with cover plates. In public areas, such as the waiting room and interviewing areas, unused receptacles should have safety plugs in them. We don't want children sticking metal objects in them.

C-12 (wires and cables securely fastened, not hanging in an unsafe manner) **C-14** (wires and cables placed in such a way as to avoid future damage) In addition to power supply and data cables check out workstations. Are walkways and foot areas free of cables? Not only are they a tripping hazard, equipment could be pulled off of a desk, damaging it and injuring someone.

C-16 (other) Use this to expand any comments or record problems that don't fit in other sections.

GENERAL OFFICE SAFETY

D-1 (light and ceiling fixtures securely attached) In addition to making sure that diffuser panels and ceiling panels are properly seated look at the ceiling panels themselves. Are they water stained (indicative of a water leak), or sagging (they've become so waterlogged that they have lost strength)? Check the office asbestos report. It will tell you whether any ceiling panels have asbestos in them. If some panels do, and others don't, you have to treat them *all* as containing asbestos. (Unless the report says that you can tell them apart visually) Tiles which have been wet or become stained need to be replaced. Not only is it unattractive but the tiles can harbor mold or mildew. Also, if the tile isn't replaced it is very easy to miss new leaks in the same area.

If the ceiling tiles have become wet the insulation above them has become soaked. It needs to be replaced as well. While mold, mildew and other nastiness won't grow on clean insulation it quickly gathers dust, and they will grow on that.

D-2 (partitions secure etc.) As you walk past a partition touch it. It should be solid. They work loose, and periodically need to be tightened (there are feet under the end of each partition, those are what usually work loose.) Some partitions have bookshelves attached. Make sure those aren't overloaded. Excessive weight can unbalance a partition.

D-3 (furniture & equipment in good condition) Non-ergonomic furniture, unfortunately, doesn't rate a **no** here. Check that desk drawers work, that overhead closures on CR/SR fixed shelf workstations stay in place, that they don't close unexpectedly. The furniture should be in good working condition, with no broken parts, sharp edges and the like.

D-4 (furniture & equipment not infringe on aisle space) The clearances on pages 6 and 7 apply here. The first time you do an office (or the first inspection after rearrangement of furniture) measure clearances to make sure these standards are met.

D-5 (file cabinets loaded properly) even two drawer filing cabinets can tip over if they have not been loaded properly (from the bottom up).

Also, there are still many old style filing tub/drawer cabinets in use. (A tub on the top, drawer on the bottom). This is an exception to "load from the bottom." The tub needs to be loaded first since it does not pull out. If it is not the cabinet will tip when the drawer is pulled out.

D-6 (inappropriate storage on top of filing cabinets, window shelves) A folder or two on top of filing cabinets isn't really a problem. I have seen offices where boxes of active files were stored on top of five drawer filing cabinets. Employees had to pull them down to search for files. In this particular office all of the employees were short women (shorter than the filing cabinets). They had to reach over their heads, pull the boxes forward, rest the box on their upper torso while searching for a file, and then push the box back on top of the cabinet.

Aside from the strain, they risked injury when the box hit them in the chest, and there was the risk the box would fall.

D-7 (aisles and walkways free of tripping hazards) Check the floors. Is the carpet in good condition? Are there any irregularities or other hazards to safe travel?

D-8 (floors clean, dry, free of trash) The lease usually contains the cleaning schedule. Some debris will accumulate during the course of a day. Is what's present explainable by that or does it indicate a buildup?

D-9 (adequate storage area provided) Offices often lack sufficient storage. If the manager isn't active in shipping, folders will accumulate. If the problem is bad enough they may need to resort to off site storage.

D-10 (materials piled in an orderly manner) Stuff will be stacked up. Is it done neatly or haphazardly? Are the piles tall enough to run the risk of toppling over?

D-11 (fans properly guarded) This question is meant to capture information on large ventilation fans, but it also serves as a reminder to check employee owned fans and any floor fans the Agency is using to circulate air in waiting rooms or other areas. If the Agency is doing this then you probably have a "no" in D-17, and the

HVAC system needs inspection/repair/balancing.

D-12 (noise levels acceptable) The age of the office will affect this. Too much noise in the office is fatiguing; prolonged exposure to noise can damage hearing. Various sound abatement techniques are available if the office is noisy.

D-13 (door hardware working) This includes hinges, locks, door closers, seals on exterior doors, handicapped (power door) buttons and openers. **Don't assume that it works, test it.** Open all doors (Emergency exits should be tested too, even if alarmed – this will also test that the alarm system works.) If a door has a deadbolt or other locking mechanism, make sure it is unlocked while people are in the building.

D-14 (aisles free of storage), **D-15** (trashcans kept out of aisles) While an office may occasionally have things in an aisle, that isn't the purpose of the aisle. Anything stored in an aisle can block or otherwise interfere with free egress. Storage in an aisle may reduce the aisle to less than the required width. Be alert to these problems.

D-16 (adequate lighting) General office illumination should be bright enough to see and do some work, but it should not be so bright that it causes glare on computer screens. Task lights should be used to provide extra illumination where needed. Each workstation should have an adjustable task light. If the light doesn't adjust properly make a note of it.

D-17 (adequate ventilation) This involves Indoor Air Quality (IAQ). If the employees have complaints we may need to investigate and request an IAQ investigation – a major topic in itself.

Improper balancing of the heating, ventilation and air conditioning system (HVAC) may show up as temperature differences. Are parts of the office hotter or colder than others? Are some parts stuffy and other parts windy? Does opening or closing a door make a noticeable change? Be especially alert for this after any new construction or renovations.

Also check things like exhaust fans – restroom exhaust fans should be ducted to the outside (local code may vary), and blow out, not in. A simple way to check the airflow is to take a short strip of tissue, tape it on the end of a yardstick or umbrella and hold it near the vent. The tissue should flutter toward the vent. Another way is to take a strip of paper from the shredder, hold it near the door, and crack the door. The air flow should be strong enough to flutter the paper strongly. Most code calls for 10 changes of air per hour, if you are feeling ambitious you can measure the restroom (length times height times width, times 10) and compare that with the CFM (cubic feet per minute) rating of the fan. If the volume is more than 10 times the rating of the fan, the fan isn't powerful enough.

Restrooms should be negatively pressurized (the air should flow into them when the doors are opened). The office should be positively pressurized (when the door is open the conditioned air should flow out, not unconditioned air flowing in.)

D-18 (room and location finders) This shouldn't be a problem, since the same diagram is supposed to be in the SAP. It should be posted in employee areas.

D-19 (stepstool or ladder) Not only should it be present it should be safe to use. If the stepstool has wheels it *must* be the kind that locks when you step on it. If there's a ladder it must be sturdy, not wobble, and in good condition. Wooden ladders are apt to becoming wobbly, but they can be tightened (the wires and nuts you see on the ladder) and made safe to use.

D-20 (clean headsets available) Do the employees know where they are? Are replacement parts available? Are there any problems (buzzing, poor sound quality)?

D-21 (floor/wall heating/AC units covered) This refers to heating and air conditioning units. If the office has them in the walls make sure all panels and grills are in place. Most likely this will be N/A, as our offices usually have central air.

D-22 (windows free of breaks/cracks) Check the exterior as well as the interior of the building. In addition to the glass look at things like the caulking and weather-stripping around windows. Gaps in that can not only make it more difficult to heat/cool the building, they can let water into the building wall, causing damage or creating conditions for mold growth.

Also use this as an opportunity to check the exterior of the building in general. Is the roof missing shingles? Water can leak through.

Many of our buildings are built with a brick veneer: it is for cosmetic purposes only. Almost always brick veneer buildings will have "weep holes" – sometimes holes about the size of a drinking straw in the mortar, sometimes mortar left out between two bricks. The holes will be low, just above slab level. These let moisture which condenses on the inside of the brick façade to escape. If the building doesn't have them the water will eventually soak through the walls. Weep holes should be above ground level, not covered by mulch, not buried under dirt, and should not be blocked or plugged.

D-23 (violation since last inspection) This question will always be a **yes** or **no** -- the office either has or has not had a citation since the last Health and Safety inspection. The violations since last inspection are found by inspections other than our Health and Safety inspections: OSHA, fire department, GSA, etc. This is the only question where a "no" is the desired answer. **If it is "yes" obtain a copy of the report.**

D-24 (VDT terminals maintained) Make sure that the terminals are working – that they don't flicker, aren't fuzzy and the like. Article 10, Appendix A, Section 2 covers this.

Find out if the employees know where cleaning materials are. If the office has them and the employees don't know it, they aren't doing any good. Most VDTs have special coatings on the glass; regular window cleaner may mess that up. There are special anti-static cleaners or cleaning pads available, those should be used. Cans of compressed air can be used to blow dust and debris from keyboards. (Just make sure the air blast isn't aimed where it or the "splash from it" can hit someone.)

D-25 (CPR Trained employees) Management is supposed to solicit volunteers (at no cost of personal time or money to the volunteer) for this. If no one volunteers then managers need to be trained. (Most contract guards are required, by their contract, to be CPR trained.) The certification expires after one year. Check the Red Cross certification cards to make sure the individuals have a current certification. Note: DOJ is responsible for providing legal representation of individual employees when sued individually.

In December 2004 OLMER advised AFGE that their interpretation of Department of Justice guidance. They interpret the DOJ guidance to mean that a CPR trained employee, trained on duty time, at government expense, who is sued in civil court or charged in criminal court, unless they are a health care professional, **most probably would not receive legal assistance from the Department of Justice.**

This means the individual

employee would bear all costs involved in any negligence lawsuit. Employees should know this before relying upon the government to defend them. State "Good Samaritan laws may still provide employees with protection.

D-26 (other) Use this to expand any comments or record problems that don't fit in other sections. Does the office have required warning signs? They should be posted conspicuously, where they are easily seen.

- No firearms -- this sign is required by an Associate Commissioner for Facilities Management memo dated September 14, 1999.
- Federal Crime warning -- (Title 18, USC provides that it is a federal offense to commit a crime against an SSA employee while performing his/her duties). An Associate Commissioner for Facilities Management memo (dated June 24, 1996) requires this.
- Does the office have a first aid kit? Are the contents up to date? Check the expiration dates to make sure that the medications/ointments etc. haven't expired. If the office has emergency supplies for *Shelter in Place* check the expiration dates of water, food and other things that expire.

There is no standard "SSA approved" first aid kit, but a draft proposal for one listed:

| Item | Quantity | Size |
|---|---------------|-------------------------------------|
| Telfa non-adherent dressings | 1 | 3" x 4" |
| Conforming gauze roll bandages | 1 | 2" x 36" |
| Gauze Dressing Pads | 2 two packs | 2" x 2" |
| Gauze Dressing Pads | 10 two packs | 4" x 4" |
| Antiseptic Wipes | 1 ten pack | individually wrapped if appropriate |
| Tylenol | 10 | unit does |
| CPR one way valve/face shield | 2 | n/a |
| Band Aids | 1 twenty pack | n/a |
| Bacitracin | 10 unit | n/a |
| Cold Pack | 1 | n/a |
| Sling | 1 | n/a |
| Rolled tape | 1 | 1" |
| American Medical Association First Aid Guide booklet/General first aid instructions | | |

The draft proposal said there should be one kit for every 26 employees, they should have seals to indicate use, be inspected/replenished after each use, and be inspected at least annually.

- If the office has barrier wall FEI (Front End Interviewing) do the employees keep the shutters/doors closed when the station is not in use? Are the doors lockable from the inside? If the door is left open when no one is at the work station (or if it can't be locked) then the office is open to anyone who gets past the guard and into the FEI corridor.

- Be a scrooge: all decorations (Christmas, Halloween, whatever) should be fire retardant. Holliday glee is ruined by fire.

HOUSEKEEPING – SANITATION

E-1 (Routine cleaning schedule) The lease for the space will contain a cleaning schedule. Has it been followed? Not only will the employees tell you, you can generally tell by looking. Ask when the cleaners work. If it is at close of business and you're inspecting in the morning the trashcans should have very little in them, the floor shouldn't be littered. If they clean in the morning you should see them at work.

E-2 (approved trash receptacles used/emptied)

Cans in kitchens should be metal and have covers.

There is a difference between trash and garbage. Trash is things like paper, dried out pens and other office debris. Garbage is stuff that will rot: food scraps, last month's refrigerator dregs and the like. The only place garbage should be found will be in the kitchen/eating area of the multi purpose room. Garbage cans should have lids on them.

E-3 (trash receptacles/cans sanitary) The cleaning schedule applies. If the trash cans are dirty they need to be cleaned – this would particularly apply to the eating area, where garbage will attract rodents. Dumpsters, if present, won't be as clean as inside trash containers. They should be reasonably clean, so that garbage doesn't attract rodents or provide a breeding ground for flies and other vermin. They shouldn't hold water to provide a breeding ground for mosquitoes.

E-4 (toilet/washing facilities) Are the bathrooms clean, properly equipped, towels, soap, toilet tissue and other needed supplies present? Is there hot and cold running water? Check all faucets (including the kitchen, employee and public restrooms), make sure that the hot water is on the left, cold on the right. (Even in new construction plumbers don't always install stuff correctly)

Is the equipment properly attached to the wall or is it hanging by one screw? Check the toilets - are the seats secure? Are the toilets securely fastened to the floor? If they aren't the wax seal can break and let sewer gasses into the office. (Assuming you wear jeans while doing your inspection the easiest way to check the toilet is to straddle it, use your legs to try and rock the toilet.) Check urinals in the same way, for the same reason.

E-5 (vending areas sanitary) **E-6** (cooking and coffee pot areas maintained) **E-7** (eating/work/ areas maintained in a sanitary condition) These are general housekeeping questions, and don't refer to normal in use clutter. Is the area clean? Is it well kept up? The Agency is required to provide soap, paper towels and the like. Is it being done?

E-8 (microwaves etc. clean) It doesn't matter if the Sunshine Fund or Kitchen Committee is 'taking care' of it, the manager is responsible to see that it is done. If you can find an affordable test card or leakage meter (I found mine at Lowes Home Improvement) check to make sure the microwave isn't emitting radiation.

E-9 (rodents and other pests) The most obvious sign of a rodent problem is their droppings. They like to travel along walls and behind things. If you can see behind refrigerators, vending machines and the like check there. Look in break room table drawers. Condiment packs (jelly, mustard, etc) are often left there. A bad infestation can show up by chewed up packets. If an office has a severe problem then any edible substance needs to be in closed metal containers – rats can chew through plastic.

E-11 (water fountains & coolers sanitary) Just what it says: Make sure the cleaning crews are cleaning them.

E-12- (other) Use this to expand any comments or record problems that don't fit in other sections.

SPECIAL INSPECTION AREAS

F-1 (outdoor walking surfaces) Check the parking lot, side walks and other means of getting into and around the building. If there is a loading dock does it have handrails to prevent a fall? If there is a gate in the loading dock rail is the gate in good working order and properly secured?

F-2 (snow and ice removal) Even in the South it can snow. What plans are in place? If the landlord does it how well does he/she handle it when it does snow? The employees can tell you.

F-3 (regular equipment inspection by bldg. management) GSA or the landlord may be building management. Things like the HVAC

system, alarm system and the like need to be checked, and records kept.

F-4 (personal protective equipment) Generally speaking this is a N/A answer. Our workspaces don't include the need for welder's goggles, biohazard clothing or the like.

F-5 (other) Use this to expand any comments or record problems that don't fit in other sections.

The New York Region has developed an Ergonomic Supplement to the 5510. Since proper ergonomic configuration of the workstations can reduce injury and make working more comfortable you should consider these things as well. Any problems you find can be put in the **other** block in the appropriate section of the 5510 (Unless you are in the New York Region I wouldn't cite their supplement, I'd cite the appropriate part of the Contract or agency documents).

SSA 5510 Additions – Ergonomics – NY Region:

| Yes | NO | Chairs | Comments |
|------------|-----------|---|-----------------|
| | | Do all employees have an ergonomic chair conforming to the provisions in Article 9 Appendix G (Ergonomics) in the National Agreement? | |
| | | Do all employees have an ergonomic chair conforming to the provisions in Article 9 Appendix G (Ergonomics) in the National Agreement? | |
| | | Are ergonomic chairs at all FEI and reception area workstations? | |
| | | If there is a training room with personal computers, are ergonomic chairs at those workstations? | |
| Yes | NO | Keyboard, Mouse and Monitor | Comments |
| | | Is the slope of the keyboard adjusted so the wrist is in a neutral typing position? | |
| | | Can the height of the keyboard surface be adjusted? | |
| | | Can the contrast and brightness of the monitors be adjusted? | |
| | | Do the screens tilt up and down and side to side? | |
| | | Are cleaning supplies for the monitor and keyboard available to each employee? | |
| | | While looking at the screen, is the top of the screen slightly below the user's eye level? | |
| | | Do employees have document holders, or know they are available? | |
| | | Do all employees have headsets or know they are available to them? | |
| | | Have glare filters been provided to employees requesting them? | |
| Yes | NO | Lighting | Comments |
| | | Are windows in the room covered with blinds or shades? | |
| | | Are screens positioned at an angle to avoid glare from windows? * | |
| | | Are screens free from reflection from overhead lighting and other sources of light? * | |

* Optional depending on Employee's Preferences



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 2.5 License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/2.5/).