

Health & Safety, Edinburgh Napier University

Multi-Functional Devices, Photocopiers and Laser Printers

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<i>Approval/Authorised Signature</i>	Sean Hughes BSc PGDip MCIOSH CMIOSH, Health & Safety Adviser
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1. Introduction

The Health & Safety Team regularly receives enquiries concerning Multi-Functional Devices (MFDs), photocopiers and laser printers from users of such machines who are fearful that their health is being compromised as a result of their requirement to use or sit near such machines during their daily work routines.

2. Recommendations

The responsibility for ensuring that a MFD, photocopier or laser printer does not present a health hazard is shared between the manufacturer, the installer and the operator. Whilst the risks to health from MFD, photocopier or laser printer use are slight, the following points should be kept in mind as they are purchased, installed and used. Modern and well maintained machines present fewer hazards. Information on the machines can either be provided by the supplier if bought by the school or service or if machines were supplied and maintained by Information Services then they would supply the relevant information.

3. Purchasing a multi-functional device, photocopier or printer

MFD, photocopier and printer manufacturers are sensitive to the concerns of their customers with regard to the safety aspects of their machines. Most companies will readily supply Product Safety Data Sheets (PSDS) relating to their machines and, by law, they have to provide, on request, Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS) relating to the products used with the machine e.g. toner.

The PSDS will give details of siting requirements for the particular machine e.g. minimum volume of the room required for natural ventilation situations, noise, emission levels, ozone emission levels etc.

The MSDS will give information on the health risks of the product, if any, e.g. route of entry to the body, symptoms, first aid measures, waste disposal, etc.

It is advisable to ask for the PSDS before placing the final order for a machine in order to highlight any siting problems. Whilst the health hazards from the associated products, if they are used correctly, are insignificant it may be prudent to ask for a copy of the MSDS to allay user concerns.

4. Installing and using the multi-functional device, photocopier or printer

Much can be done to alleviate employee concerns about MFDs, photocopiers and laser printers by giving careful consideration to the location of the machine in relation to the employee workstations.

Large machines which are capable of collating, or are used regularly for long copy runs, should ideally be sited in dedicated copy rooms with adequate natural or mechanical ventilation. If this is not possible, they should be placed well away from staff workstations and long runs of printing or copying carried out at times when the minimum of stress will be caused to staff e.g. break times.

Smaller machines which are not capable of collating etc. and are not used regularly for long runs, may be housed within the room occupied by staff, however, it is prudent to observe the following points:

- Air vented from the machine into the room should be filtered (NB: most modern machines incorporate such filters to reduce ozone emission).
- Do not place anything around or near the exhaust or air intakes around the machine. Maintain a distance of at least 500mm from any area of the machine. Also, ensure that any flammable materials or chemicals are kept well clear of the machine. Any chemicals require to be stored in a cupboard and recorded on the hazardous database (contact Health and Safety Office for access to this system).
- Machines should be sited such that exhaust emissions do not travel over workstations or personnel.
- Ensure regular servicing of the machine.
- Consideration should be given as to the adequacy of the ventilation in the room i.e. size of room, natural or mechanical ventilation.
- Refilling techniques for toner in dry (xerographic) machines should be given special attention avoiding spillage wherever possible.
- Toner spillages should be cleaned up with care and ideally if persons are known to have compromised respiratory systems they should not be asked to carry out this task.
- Spent toner from a machine should be placed in sealed bags for disposal.

MFDs, photocopiers and laser printers are used world-wide by many people without any problems. However, machines that are improperly installed, maintained or operated can cause problems of an unpredictable nature. In addition, as with any chemical hazard, certain individuals are more susceptible to the possible problems, caused by the machine, than others.

5. References and sources of other information

MFDs - faults/issues consult information sheet above the machine.

Ozone: Health Hazards and Control Measures. [Health and Safety Executive Guidance Note EH38](#).

Workplace Exposure Limits. [Health and Safety Executive Guidance Note EH40](#).

Control of Substances Hazardous to Health. [Health and Safety Executive Approved Code of Practice](#).