

Safety Notice: Falls From Chairs

Department of Occupational Health and Safety
yorku.ca/dohs

A text only version of this document is available at:

www.yorku.ca/ergo/chairsafety-outline.pdf

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Table of contents

- 1) Examples of improper chair use that has led to injuries
- 2) Who should inspect chairs
- 3) How often should chairs be inspected
- 4) What to do if you find a chair defect
- 5) What to look for

1) Examples Of Improper Chair Use That Has Led To Injuries

The following situations have resulted in chair tip-overs and/or collapse of chair legs:

- Reclining and putting your feet up on a desk or having the front legs of the chair come off the ground.
- Rolling while seated in a chair for extended distances. Chair wheels have jammed causing a tip-over. (If your destination is more than a step away, get up and walk instead of rolling in your chair.)
- Reclining too quickly in a chair with low recline tension.
 - When reclining in a chair for the first time, recline very slowly to test the recline tension.
- Leaning to the side to reach something while seated in a chair.
 - Move your chair or walk instead of leaning.
- Putting all your weight at the very front edge of the chair. If you sit too far forward, the chair can tip over.

2) Who Should Inspect Chairs

- 1) The primary user of a chair can perform the inspection described in this bulletin.
- 2) For chairs that don't have a primary user:
 - Chairs that are used by a number of different people
 - Chairs in meeting rooms, reception areas and staff rooms
 - a. Department Heads and Supervisors should ensure that someone inspects chairs in their area that don't have primary users (This step is not necessary for classroom chairs).
 - b. It should be clear to the users of these chairs, who they should report problems to, should they find one. For example, a contact number could be posted.

Document the inspection

- After you have inspected a chair, document the inspection in some way.
- Example:
 - Place a dated sticker on the chair
 - Example:

Date of inspection: _____

Inspected by: _____

(Department)

- Keep a departmental log with inspection details.

3) How Often Should Chairs Be Inspected

- Chairs should be inspected at least once a year.
- Advantages of regular chair inspections:
 - Catch small problems before they become big problems
 - Catch problems while a chair may still be under warranty
 - Prevent injuries

4) What To Do If You Find A Chair Defect

- If you feel the chair is not safe to sit on
 - Place a sign on the chair (e.g. Unsafe: Do Not Use)
- Contact Campus Services & Business Operations (CSBO) to get it fixed

Varda Kernerman, Furnishings Coordinator
Planning & Architectural Design Services, CSBO
Telephone: 416.990.0877 (mobile)
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 - Speak with your supervisor about whether you should report it or if there is a designated individual in your department who will report it
- To avoid delays, be specific when describing the chair problem
 - Include the chair's warranty number (if any)
 - If this number isn't already logged anywhere, you can usually find it on a sticker affixed to the bottom of the chair's seat

Unsafe:
Do Not Use

Chairs with only 4 wheels or glides cannot be repaired

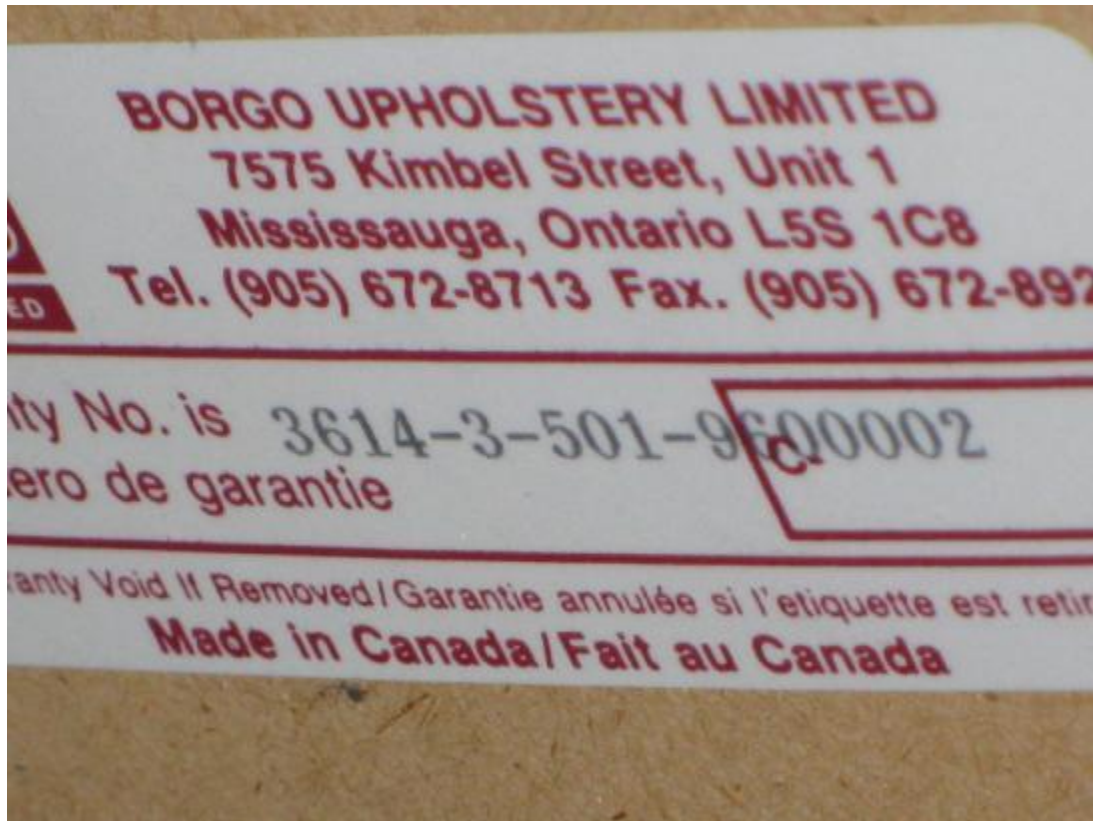


Chairs with moving parts that are out of warranty (typically 10 years)

- These chairs should not be repaired
- Begin budgeting for chair replacement when they are no longer under warranty
- If the chair is not date stamped, contact CSBO with the warranty or serial number to find out if the chair is still under warranty

Chair warranty or serial number

- If the chair needs to be repaired, you'll need the warranty or serial #
- It's typically found on the bottom of the seat or on the mechanism attached to the seat.



Viewing the bottom of the seat without hurting your back

- Injury can result if your chair is not handled carefully
- If you need to look beneath the seat (e.g. to see the serial number)
 - Avoid lowering it all the way to the ground
 - Have a colleague hold the chair while you look beneath the seat



Disposing of chairs that cannot be fixed

- Submit a service request to arrange for the disposal of any chair that can't be fixed
- <http://www.yorku.ca/csbo/requestform.html>

Symbols used in this document

These symbols are used in the following inspection steps:

- Yellow Light: Chair should be repaired or replaced as soon as possible.
- Red Light: Place a tag on this chair: "Unsafe: Do Not Use"
- Yellow & Red Light: Response depends upon severity of the problem (if in doubt refer to contacts on the last slide)



5) Things to look for

Weight capacity

- Most standard office chairs are designed to support up to 250 pounds. Stronger chairs are available upon request.
- Action:
 - Chair should be replaced as soon as possible.



Chair controls

- Test the chair controls listed below (if present) to ensure that all moving parts move smoothly and easily through their complete range of motion.
 - Seat height
 - Seat angle
 - Seat depth
 - Backrest angle
 - Backrest height
 - Arm rest height
 - Arm rest angle
- For information on how to use your chair's controls, refer to
 - <http://www.yorku.ca/dohs/ergo-chaircontrol.html>
- Action:
 - Response depends upon severity of the problem

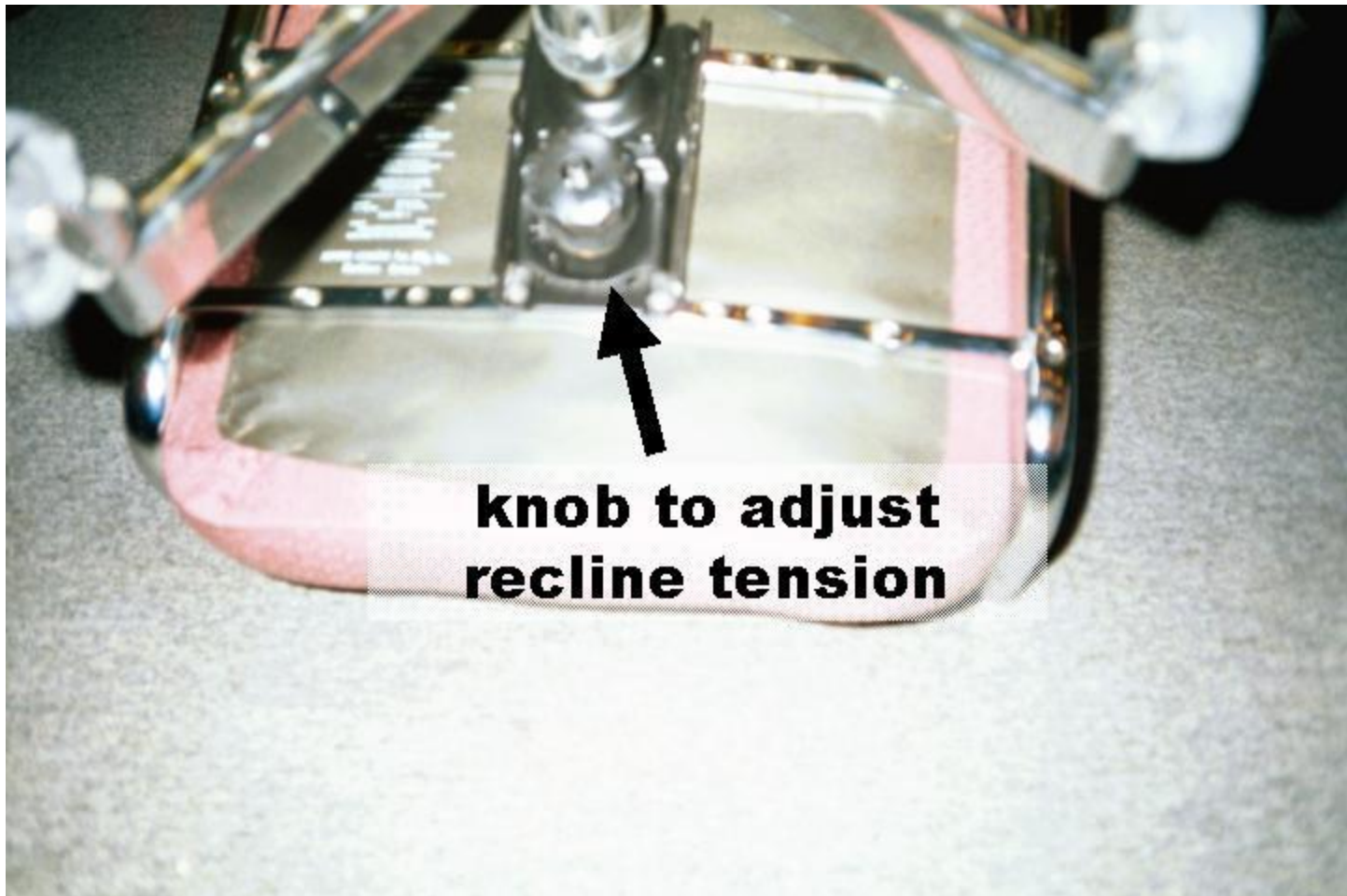


Recline tension

- If you lean back in some chairs, they will recline
- The ease with which a chair reclines (“recline tension”) is usually adjustable
- This control may not look the same on all chairs. It is usually near the front edge of the seat, in front of the cylinder of the chair base.
- If the tension is too low, the chair could tip over; especially for someone who is not a regular user of the chair
- Problem:
 - Chair reclines too easily when the tension is at its maximum.
- Warning:
 - Recline very slowly if you are sitting a chair for the first time.
- Action:
 - Place a tag on this chair: "Unsafe: Do Not Use"



Knob to adjust recline tension



Seat height

- Problem:
 - Seat height is different at the end of the day than at the beginning of the day (unless you adjusted it)
- Action:
 - Chair should be repaired or replaced as soon as possible.



Loose backrest, seat, or armrests

- All chair components will move a little if you push on them
- Problems:
 - Left arm rest adjustments feel different than right arm rest adjustments
 - When you lean from side to side or front to back, the chair wobbles more than a co-workers chair of the same type
- Action:
 - Response depends upon severity of the problem



Wheels

- Problems:
 - Wheels sticking or squeaking
 - Chair doesn't roll easily on the floor
- Action:
 - Response depends upon severity of the problem



Loose or missing screws

- Most chairs have 4 screws to attach each armrest to the seat and 4 screws to attach the seat to the base.
- Problem:
 - Screws that you can reach/see easily are loose or missing
- Action:
 - Response depends upon severity of the problem



Example: Two missing screws connecting seat to base

Action: Place a tag on this chair: "Unsafe: Do Not Use"



Example: Armrest on left is missing a screw

Example: Keilhauer Tom chair

Action: Remove armrests or

Place a tag on this chair: "Unsafe: Do Not Use"



Example: Right armrest is missing a screw, it should not swivel

Example: Jupiter chair

Action: Remove armrests or

Place a tag on this chair: "Unsafe: Do Not Use"



Visible cracks

- Problem:
 - Visible cracks in an area that could cause an armrest, seat or backrest to collapse
- Action:
 - Place a tag on this chair: "Unsafe: Do Not Use"



Example: Visible crack on chair leg

Has been observed primarily on 5 wheeled, chrome bases

Action: Place a tag on this chair: "Unsafe: Do Not Use"



Other signs that a chair leg is ready to fail



- seat rocking from side to side or front to back
- one of the wheels no longer touching the ground
- Quick check to assess that all wheels are touching the ground:
 - Place your foot over a wheel
 - Push down with your foot. The chair should not wobble
 - Repeat for all wheels
- Action: Place a tag on this chair: "Unsafe: Do Not Use"



Example: Visible crack on wheel

Action: Place a tag on this chair: "Unsafe: Do Not Use"



Example: Visible crack on bottom of seat

- Example: Borgo Bravo (serial # starts with 93)
- Yellow arrow indicates location where crack may appear



Example: Visible crack on bottom of seat (con'd)

- Small crack can progress to complete separation of cylinder from bottom of seat
- Action: Place a tag on this chair: "Unsafe: Do Not Use"



Example: Visible crack on bottom of seat (con'd)

- If you have turned your chair upside down, the plastic sleeve (on the chair's cylinder) may be covering the crack, as shown in the photo on the left. You can slide the sleeve out of the way, when doing your inspection (photo on the right).



Splits in the board in the back rest.

- Problem:
 - Back board on the chair on the left (next slide) is split across the width of the back rest.
 - May not be obvious from visual inspection.
 - To check, grab the top of the back rest and try to bend it.
- Action:
 - Place a tag on this chair: "Unsafe: Do Not Use"



Example: Splits in the board in the back rest.



Still Not Sure About Your Chair

- If after these steps, you are not sure if your chair has a problem, compare it with a co-worker's chair (if it is the same type and model)
- Campus Services & Business Operations (CSBO) contact:

Varda Kernerman, Furnishings Coordinator

Planning & Architectural Design Services

Telephone: 416.990.0877 (mobile)

E-mail: vardak@yorku.ca

Reference

- Office Chair Safety Tips

- http://www.globaltotaloffice.com/gu_2012/control.php?ce=ce_chair_safety.html