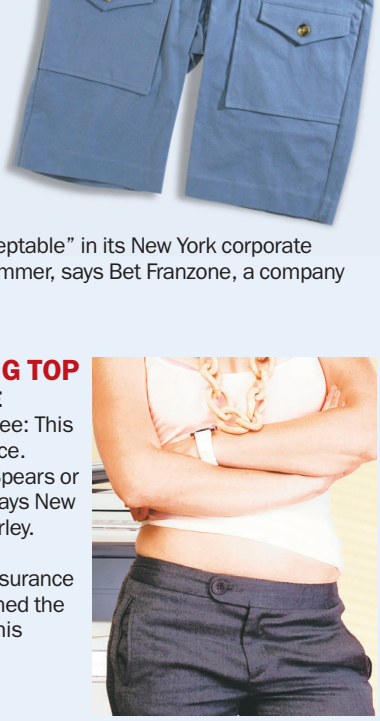
The Dow Jones Office-Casual Risk Index

This summer's fashion trends are fueling a wave of extreme-casual clothes in the workplace. To find out which of the current styles can be pulled off in the office, we polled stylists, human-resources managers and CEOs.

CITY SHORTS



Risk Factor: LOW

City shorts are appropriate office attire if you wear them as you would a skirt, says stylist Mary Walbridge. Pair them with a jacket and high heels and pick styles that fall just above the knee. American Express considers dressy city shorts "perfectly acceptable" in its New York corporate headquarters this summer, says Bet Franzone, a company spokesman.

MIDRIFF-BARING TOP

Risk Factor: SEVERE

CEOs and stylists agree: This look is not for the office. "Leave it for Britney Spears or Christina Aguilera," says New York stylist Sarah Shirley. Companies such as Nationwide Mutual Insurance have specifically banned the look in dress codes this summer.

MEN'S UNTUCKED DRESS SHIRTS

Risk Factor: ELEVATED

In any conservative office, shirts should be tucked in. But in some settings, such as Hollywood, Silicon Valley and design firms, a young man can pull off the look if he wears a high-quality, ironed shirt, says stylist Fati Parsia.

FLIP-FLOPS

Risk Factor: SEVERE

Employers from Northrop Grumman to the U.S. Commerce Department have banned flip-flops for men and women. Lori Erickson, vice president of human resources for Monster.com, says that in some cases, a dressier flip-flop style might pass at the office, but Joe Vocino, a senior consultant at Mercer Human Resource Consulting, says, "Never. Too casual."

MINISKIRTS

Risk factor: ELEVATED

Mr. Vocino says a skirt a few inches above the knee is "probably OK," but no higher. "Anything that's considered provocative is not acceptable," he adds. Stylist Lauren Chung advises sticking with hemlines no higher than two inches above the knee.

SPAGHETTI STRAPS

Risk Factor: ELEVATED

Shoulder-baring spaghetti straps can work only if they are covered by a jacket, says Ms. Shirley. Tank tops are acceptable only in the privacy of your office. Merlot Marketing Chief Executive Debi Hammond once sent a receptionist wearing a halter top home to change.

MEN'S T-SHIRTS

Risk Factor: SEVERE

Stay away from T-shirts completely at the office. Shirts with writing are particularly inappropriate. Ford Motor prohibits them entirely. Ms. Parsia advises avoiding them even in creative environments. "You'll be mistaken for the mailroom guy," she says.

SHEER BLOUSES

Risk Factor: ELEVATED

You can get away with a sheer blouse if you've got an opaque camisole on underneath and a jacket on top, says Ms. Chung. But wearing a brightly colored undergarment underneath won't pass muster at work.

SUNDRESS

Risk Factor: LOW

Tailored sundresses that hit the knee and have a conservative neckline can work if paired with a blazer. But it's a slippery slope. Dick Wolfe, an executive at Gibbs & Soell communications firm, nixed a job applicant for wearing a sundress he thought was too revealing and casual for a job interview.

CAPRI PANTS

Risk Factor: LOW

Many companies now allow capris, including Prudential Financial in Dubuque, Iowa, which recently decided that the cropped pants are acceptable five days a week, instead of just Fridays. Pair capris with pumps in a conservative office, or with ballet flats in a trendier environment, says Ms. Parsia.

From top left: Shorts and sheer blouse by Tuleh at Saks Fifth Avenue; spaghetti-straps top by John Galliano and miniskirt by Marc by Marc Jacobs, both at Bergdorf Goodman; Ericka Burchett (8); Les Wollam/Getty (untucked shirt); Dennis Chalkin (midriff).