

Risk Manager

Answers, resources and information to help assess and reduce risk

Watch Your Steps – Sidewalk Inspections By Derek Neubauer

With the change of the season's right around the corner, the condition of a school district's sidewalks may be the least of the concerns. Freezing and saturation of the ground over the winter may have changed the condition of your sidewalks. Winter precipitation, in conjunction with repeated freezing and thawing conditions may cause sidewalks to heave or crack. This issue may contribute to trip/fall hazards which cause injuries every year. Maintenance and repair of sidewalks is an important function to assist in reducing the frequency and severity of trip and fall injuries on school district property.

To assist in injury reduction on sidewalks and minimize exposures, School Districts should follow these steps:

1. Determine criteria for repair and replacement of sidewalks.
 - Include a policy that says what conditions warrant replacement or repair such as cracks, missing pieces or heaving sidewalks.
2. Develop a sidewalk inspection program.
 - Staff members should conduct inspections by walking all sidewalks and noting any problems.
3. Develop a policy that establishes a repair and maintenance procedure.

- If there are budget limitations, concentrate on the most obvious problems and high traffic areas.
4. Keep inspection records.
 - The records should indicate what areas were inspected, any issues discovered, and what will be done about it.
 5. Remedy any problems.
 - Any area that is deemed to need improvement should be repaired as soon as possible.

Regular inspections based on established criteria of all sidewalks should be an important part of any school's maintenance program. Regular inspections can impact the establishment of potential budget money for replacement or repairs. Usually, when dealt with earlier as opposed to later, the corrections can be less costly and easier to implement. Your school sidewalks see a lot of traffic from students, staff and the general public. Don't wait until someone is injured to initiate repairs. By increasing awareness and being proactive, as well as partnering with CM Regent's Risk Management Team, sidewalk injury prevention can be improved.

Contact us at (866) 401-6600 to schedule a physical inspection of your walking surfaces. The time spent by doing that now could assist in the reduction of these types of claims and overall cost control.

For additional information or training on best practices and safety management within your school entity, please contact Director of Risk Management Sharon Orr at (866) 401-6600, ext. 7152 or sorr@cmregent.com.