FALL 2018

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Back-To-School Safety Tips

By Derek Neubauer, risk control consultant

School has begun, and teachers, parents and administrators should use the following information to help protect students from harm at school, at home and at play.

Playgrounds

Each year, according to a Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) study, there are more than 200,000 kids treated in United States hospital emergency rooms for playground injuries. Most of these injuries occur from falling off playground equipment. Review the surfacing material of your playgrounds. Depending on the type of surface material that is present on the playground, the depth may differ.

According to the Consumer Product Safety Commission's Public Playground Safety Handbook, the surface material should be *at least* the following depths:

Shredded Recycled Rubber . . . . . 6 inches
Wood Mulch . . . . . 9 inches
Wood Chips . . . . . 9 inches
Pea Gravel . . . . . 9 inches

Bike Helmets

Kids will occasionally ride their bikes to school or even at school as part of the curriculum. Be sure they always wear a helmet and are educated on how to wear it properly. Helmet use can reduce the risk of head injury by 85 percent. While helmets are good to have on while riding a bike, they can be detrimental when children are playing on or around playground equipment. Playground staff should inform children to remove their helmets before entering the playground area.

Backpacks

Textbooks, notebooks, lunch, toys … how much weight are students carrying back and forth each day? Children, as well as adults, can incur back injuries from carrying heavy loads over short and long periods of time. Backpacks should not be used on or around playground equipment.

Jackets, Sweatshirts, Drawstrings and ID Badges

Drawstrings on jackets and sweatshirts, along with ID badges that go around students' necks, can get caught on playground objects. Staff members should recognize when a student is wearing these pieces and ensure that they are removed before the student is permitted on the playground.

A drawstring at the waist or bottom of an article of clothing should be no longer than three inches.

Classroom Supply Lists and Donated Cleaning Products

By Kyle Stewart, risk control consultant

- ☑ Disinfectant wipes
- ☑ Disinfectant spray
- ☑ Hand sanitizer
- ☑ Tissues
- ☑ Paper towels
- ☑ Ziploc bags

At the start of the school year, it's common for classroom supply donation lists to be distributed to students. To reduce the spread of germs among students within the classroom, cleaning products such as disinfectant wipes, disinfectant sprays and hand sanitizers are often included on those lists. Although the intention of placing cleaning products on classroom supply lists is well intended, schools should evaluate their policy on donated products from home to ensure adequate risk control measures are in place to reduce work-related injuries and liability exposures.

At minimum, school administrators should evaluate their current policy pertaining to cleaning products not purchased by the district to ensure products brought from home are stored properly, safety product information is provided by the manufacturer and appropriate training is provided to staff members. The following criteria should be evaluated and further discussed as it pertains to cleaning supplies donated and/or requested on classroom supply lists:

Safety Data Sheets

A Safety Data Sheet (SDS) should be obtained and kept on file from the manufacturer and/or distributing vendor for each cleaning product brought into the school and included with the district's master file of SDSs. If the district permits the product to remain in school buildings, the product should also be listed on the district's chemical inventory. The chemical compounds (i.e., ingredients) of the cleaning product should also be evaluated to determine if the product should be included on the district's annual Hazardous Substance Survey Form.

Incompatibilities with Other Products

Prior to allowing donated cleaning products to be used within district buildings, the district staff member responsible for evaluating hazardous substances/cleaning products should review the SDS to determine if the donated product is incompatible with any products currently utilized by the district's custodial operations. All products should contain a label depicting the required health and safety communications per the Globally Harmonized System.

Improper Storage

Most individuals assume hand sanitizers and cleaning products are not hazardous or dangerous because they are sold to the public in most stores. This perception is true if the product is stored properly and used in accordance with the manufacturer's recommendation. To ensure the product is stored properly, refer to the product's SDS for specific guidelines regarding conditions to avoid. Hand sanitizer, for example, is a flammable material. Care must be taken to ensure the product is not stored near any potential ignition sources, which could cause it to combust. Preventative measures should be taken to ensure that students and staff are not permitted access to cleaning products unless they possess the proper safety training, particularly if cleaning products are stored within classrooms.

Pennsylvania Worker and Community Right-to-Know Act

By law, the Pennsylvania Worker and Community Right-to-Know Act states that employees have the right to know about products being used at their place of employment and in the community they reside in.

The Worker and Community Right-to-Know Act specifies requirements pertaining to:

- Posting of the workplace notice
- Providing training
- Compiling hazardous substance survey forms and work area lists
- Obtaining a SDS
- Ensuring all products are labeled
- Maintaining health and exposure records

Although the notion of donated cleaning products may appear a win-win, the accumulation of excessive quantities throughout the year(s) can create storage issues. The district also may absorb significant costs to dispose of large quantities of unused hazardous substances.

SCHOOL BUS SAFETY *FOR STAFF*

By Mark Nease, risk control consultant

School bus drivers are entrusted with getting students to and from school safely and creating a positive environment for their riders. But, it's also important for school bus drivers and staff who ride on school buses to make sure they take steps to ensure their **own** safety. Here are some tips and suggestions for keeping yourself safe throughout the year.

Be prepared for the weather.

- Make sure you wear **appropriate footwear** based on environmental conditions each day. Be prepared for slippery surfaces during the winter season and wear slip-resistant footwear. Consider over-the-shoe, slip-resistant devices that are designed to improve traction on snowy and icy surfaces in case you find yourself in wintery conditions.
- **Avoid the temptation to run** from the bus to a building when it is raining. Take your time to avoid slipping on wet pavement.
- Pay attention to **weather alerts** and forecasts.

Monitor the conditions of your bus.

- Take a look your **staircase treads**. Is there sufficient traction? Is it kept clean so that the surfacing material provides the best traction?
- Be aware of the **distance from the steps to the ground**. This depth could change depending on where the bus is parked. Being aware and taking extra precautions when exiting the bus will help minimize the risk for falls.
- **Use the handrail** when ascending or descending the staircase to help maintain your balance. Always face forward when ascending and descending the staircase. Turning around to speak to someone when using the staircase puts you at risk for tripping over the next step.
- **Don't walk backwards** when sweeping the floor of your bus, especially if the rear emergency door is open.
- Some school districts use **Type-D or "Transit Style"** school buses in their bus fleet. Type-D school buses are designed with a flat front and the engine compartment is located next to the driver's seat leaving a narrow passageway for accessing the driver's seat. If you have one of these buses, be aware when walking from the staircase to the driver's seat and vice versa to avoid tripping.

Handle keys with care.

- If you are asked to retrieve another driver's keys or to give your keys to a bus mechanic, always **hand the keys** to the other person. Never toss keys. A person catching a flying set of keys is at risk of being cut by the keys.

Prepare chaperons and staff passengers.

- School-bus passengers, like staff and field-trip chaperons, need to **follow safety protocols** too. Make sure passengers know the **safety instructions** and their role in the event that there is an emergency. Make sure they know how to assist in an evacuation of the bus. Tell passengers to sit facing forward with their backs against the seat-back.
- If there are **children with special needs** on your bus, ensure there are sufficient staff available to help with things like lifting wheelchairs or moving students from a wheelchair to a bus seat.

It is your responsibility as an employee to ensure that you follow all protocols necessary to avoid accidents and injuries. Heeding these tips may help you safely complete your trip.

Falls From Heights: A HIGHER LEVEL OF HAZARD

By Edgar Boord, risk control consultant

Slips, trips, and falls are often the most frequently recurring incident in the workplace. This is primarily because the hazards and causal factors exist just about everywhere, and at any time while moving, standing and even sitting. Since this is commonly the case, what could possibly make things worse? Perhaps encountering the same hazards on a stage, loading dock or another raised working surface that could increase the severity of that incident. Therefore, extra precautions should be taken when working on different levels such as raised platforms, stages, loading docks and mezzanines.

It is important to first understand what may cause an accidental fall from a higher level. Essentially, any hazard that presents the risk for a slip/trip/fall also applies to working from heights. This can include cords and other trip hazards, slick surfaces and even an individual's own feet. As far as potential hazards, here are some things to consider while working from heights:

- Extension and equipment cords
- Protruding objects/obstacles
- Clutter and debris
- Uneven working surfaces
- Drink and other liquid spills
- Oil/grease and other slick surfaces
- Sloped/ramped areas
- Lack of awareness

Although the hazards that can cause a slip, trip or fall may be removed or minimized, there may also be a need for something to protect an individual from physically falling from the elevated work surface.

In general , fall protection is required when working from heights of four feet or greater [OSHA 29 CFR 1910.28 (b)(1)].

Fall protection will generally consist of a guardrail/handrail system meeting the requirements of 1910.28. However, personal fall arrest systems and other items, such as positioning belts, may be used depending on the surface and height individuals are working from (i.e. sloped roofs or ladders). As a best practice, handrails or a guardrail system may enhance safety for students and staff, even if a walking/working surface is under the four-foot height threshold. It would be safe to assume that the higher the fall, the higher the severity associated with it.

Another aspect to consider when trying to minimize falls from heights is the improper use of chairs, tables and desks.

Although these items may be conveniently located beneath the planned location of a poster or decoration, these items are not designed to sustain shifting body weight. A chair can safely hold an individual while sitting; however, the center of gravity will drastically change when an individual begins to stand on the chair, and then move off center while reaching outward to perform a task. Step stools and ladders are specifically designed for this purpose and should be used regardless of the convenient location of a chair, table or desk.

Even though step stools and ladders are a much safer alternative, they do have their limitations. For example, never stand on the top rung of a ladder and always utilize three points of contact. Step stools and ladders should always be used according to manufacturer instructions. Individuals may be more likely to use a step stool if it is located nearby. Additionally, employees should be informed of the step stool storage locations to avoid confusion or wasting time searching for one.

A lack of awareness can be one of the biggest contributors to falls from heights.

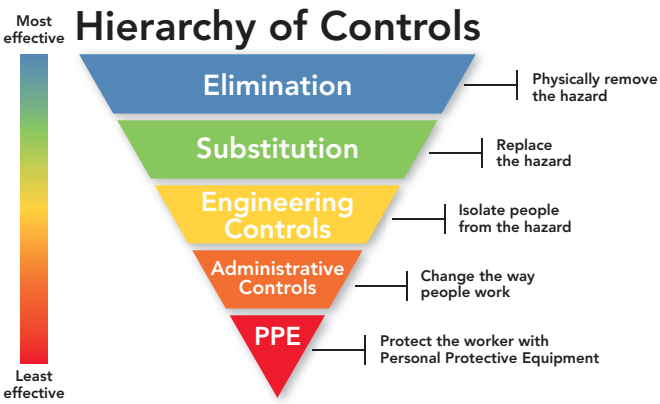
An individual who is unaware of his or her surroundings may not notice a slip/trip/fall hazard even if he or she is about to step off a stage or loading dock. Limiting distractions and maintaining awareness of surroundings can be one of the greatest ways to avoid potential falls from heights and a trip to the emergency room.

Crash Avoidance Technologies

AND AVOIDING COLLISIONS

By Jake Ruziecki, risk control consultant

Although nearly every new passenger vehicle sold in the U.S. is now equipped with advanced safety features and some level of autonomous driving, road crashes are still gradually on the rise. According to the Association for Safe International Travel, road crashes cost the U.S. just over $230 billion per year, or an average of $820 per person. When we think about controlling exposures to hazards, the **Hierarchy of Controls** is the first method used to assess and implement hazard solutions. **Elimination** and **Substitution**, while most effective, are the most difficult to implement into a society that runs almost entirely on fossil fuels.



As you may have already guessed, **Engineering Controls** are the next most favored control method across all industries for protecting individuals from exposures. These controls include technology as simple as airbags all the way up to automatic braking systems. Although we have not reached the point of fully-autonomous driving, we can see many of these controls now becoming required by law to continue the push for roadway safety. For example, as of 2018, under federal law, all new passenger vehicles under 10,000 lbs. are required to have backup cameras.

If trading up for a newer, safer fleet isn't in the budget, there's still an abundance of options available to improve the safety of your drivers. The number one concern related to collisions is distracted driving, and technology continues to be the turning point for safety when it comes to this matter. It is important to consider what crash avoidance technology products are available for your vehicles. Some may come standard or optional from the factory and others may be offered by aftermarket companies with similar installations as telematics technologies. Some of these may include:

- Forward collision warning
- Backup cameras
- Automatic braking
- Lane departure
- Blind spot detection

Although these engineering controls can greatly improve the safety of drivers, their importance needs to be backed by **Administrative Controls**. Many of these technologies may be easily disabled by the operator with the push of a button on the dash, which may further increase the risk of an accident. A successful administrative program should focus on:

- Educating drivers on vehicle safety features
- Monitoring effectiveness through methods such as telematics
- Scheduling time to gather feedback from drivers to improve policies
- Updating policies and driver handbooks to improve effectiveness

Although one of the only controls available when it comes to **Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)** is the seatbelt, which should always be utilized, you can still anticipate a decrease in roadway crashes by providing proper engineering and administrative controls.

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717-590-8008
Toll-free 844-480-0709
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