

Risk Manager

Answers, resources and information to help assess and reduce risk

Summer and Student Help By Edgar Boord

It is not uncommon for schools to hire and bring in extra help during the summer months in order to gain assistance with various tasks and job duties. This help can often be current and former students who may be looking for work experience for future employment. Extra help during the summer months can be an excellent way to get ready for the upcoming school year. Although this is the case, there are a few important things to remember before hiring or bringing in summer help.

Whether or not the worker will be covered under the school's worker's compensation coverage should be considered prior to assigning work and tasks for the individuals. In many instances, student help is voluntary; therefore, they would not receive pay and worker's compensation benefits. This could present unwanted liability issues if coverage is not properly outlined within a contractual agreement. The level of hazard, and subsequent potential for injury, illness, and damage to property, should all be considered prior to hiring the individuals and assigning work. The job duties and tasks being assigned to an individual should be dependent on not only the employment type, but also the individual's prior work experience. Someone who has had a substantial amount of prior work experience may be better suited to carry out more in-depth work than someone who has no prior work experience, such as a student.

Office-type work, and tasks that present little hazard to the help should be taken into consideration before those tasks that pose various hazards. If an

individual is brought on or hired for summer help, the use of equipment such as power tools, vehicles, and mobile equipment should be restricted. Equipment that may present a heightened level of hazard to themselves, as well as others, should only be utilized if the individual has been properly trained and is knowledgeable with use on that specific piece of equipment. The individual should also be properly covered by either the school or, if contracted, by their employer. Certificates of insurance should always be reviewed prior to use of contracted services.

Regardless of the type of activity an individual will be required to carry out, they should always go through new hire orientation to include safety awareness. Any safety-related policies, procedures, and programs set forth by the school and that would affect that individual, should be included in this orientation. To further increase the level of awareness of that individual, safety-related information, especially related to the work being conducted, should also be given to the individual in for their review.

In order to further decrease the likelihood of an incident to occur, summer and student help should be properly supervised by responsible individuals. By having knowledgeable staff members maintaining supervision of the summer help, the various safety-related procedures, policies, and programs can be enforced. Also, as with any employee of the school, the summer help should be given the same safety controls, such as personal

protective equipment. They should also be instructed on proper care, maintenance, and use of these equipment and controls. If properly utilizing and enforcing these precautions for summer help, the likelihood of an incident to occur, and pursuant liability issues to surface, can be greatly decreased.

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.