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RISK manager

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CLASSROOM MEDIA BOARD SAFETY

by Mark Nease, risk control consultant

Today's classrooms use multi-media hardware, including Smart boards, Promethean boards, computer projectors and flat screen televisions. This hardware is either fixed-mounted to the structure of the building or stand-mounted to a cart for mobile use. Consider the safety of these devices so that they don't become dislodged and fall onto a person.

Risks

One technique for mounting a Promethean board is to hang the device on a metal mount secured to the wall. When a chair gets backed into the wall and the seat back wedges under the device, this can lift the Promethean board from its mount and cause it to fall to the floor.

Incorrectly installing the recommended mounting hardware—such as using the wrong hardware for concrete walls or attaching lag bolts through drywall and missing the studs—can increase the risk of the media device detaching from the wall and striking a student or staff member.

Flat-screen media devices have gotten thinner over the years, allowing small hands to grasp and tug on them. Savvy students looking to act on their intuitions without intent to cause harm, but "to see what would happen," may proceed to pull at these devices over the course of the school time. Consider the possibility of a student pulling on your classroom's media board and causing it to fall.

Promethean boards mounted to a mobile stand per the manufacturer's recommendation can topple over as an adult pushes the device to another location. Media boards/carts are less stable when adjusted to the highest position. The vertical position of the media board (on adjustable mobile stands), along with being unaware of the mobile stand's wheels set in the locked position, can lead a person to push the media board/mobile stand over and strike anything in its pathway. Strain injuries can also occur when the wheels of the mobile stand fail to turn or rotate effectively.

MEDIA BOARD BEST PRACTICES

Only a competent person should be assigned the task of installing fix-mounted media devices. This person must understand the necessary hardware for the building wall design so a media device cannot become dislodged from the mounting surface.

Administrators and teaching staff should communicate clearly to students a discipline policy regarding any tampering with the media devices related to how they are secured to the walls.

Inspections: Custodial/maintenance staff and teaching staff should inspect the secureness of fixed-mounted media boards in classrooms on a periodic basis. Discrepancies must be immediately addressed.

Mobile stands: Media boards should be lowered (if height adjustable) fully before attempting to move the mobile stand. Wheels should be "unlocked" so that they will rotate and turn smoothly. Two persons should transport mobile carts, especially into hallways and over elevator thresholds.

Today's classrooms contain multi-media hardware beneficial to classroom instruction. With the installation of these devices comes a risk of them becoming loose and falling onto an occupant in the classroom. Careful attention to the installation process, a classroom tamper-proof policy that is monitored and enforced, and an inspection policy, along with attention to mobile stand use, can be a viable risk reduction solution to injury of students and staff from being struck by a media board.

Safety Data Sheets and GHS:
WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

By Edgar Boord, risk control consultant

Safety data sheets (SDS) are documents in which chemical manufacturers provide all the necessary information an individual or business should know about that specific chemical or substance. SDSs are generally broken down into 16 sections and include specific information on the substance's chemical composition, storage and disposal requirement as well as any safety considerations, such as personal protective equipment to wear and what to do in case of a spill or exposure.

The Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals, or GHS, was adopted by the Occupational Health and Safety Administration (OSHA) in 2012 as part of an internationally-accepted method for communicating hazards and any necessary information related to chemical substances. Along with this change in requirements, SDSs have been transitioned by chemical manufacturers to become more uniform and easier to reference for users.

Here are a few risks associated with chemical substances:

- Individuals handling a substance that they are not familiar with may be at **risk of exposure** if safety precautions outlined in the SDS are not followed. If a school member uses a harsh cleaning chemical improperly within a crowded school setting, the results could be disastrous.
- Chemical substances can **range in their hazardous properties**, impacts on the environment and level of those hazards/impacts.
- The symptoms of exposure to some chemicals are not always immediate and noticeable. Exposure can often be **chronic with very severe illnesses and symptoms occurring over time**.
- Many chemicals, if not properly stored, can be **highly reactive** with one another or even water and moisture. This can create issues such as **fire/explosion**, **corrosive properties** or the release of **toxic vapors and fumes**.
- Lack of a complete and updated SDS inventory is not only a **compliance issue**, but also poses a risk to those working with or in proximity to potentially hazardous substances.

Chemical use best practices:

- If not already in place, an inventory of SDSs for your workplace should be organized and kept up to date. In addition, chemical storage areas should have a method for employees to quickly reference those SDSs. This may be a binder of SDSs, or access to an electronic database.
- Per the Right to Know Act, all employees and other individuals present in the workplace have a "right to know" the potential hazards associated with a hazardous material. This is generally through methods such as labelling and pictograms; however, employee access to SDSs is also important.
- Employees who routinely use chemicals in the workplace, such as custodial, maintenance and food service employees, should be trained in the safe handling of those chemicals. This should be coupled with Hazard Communication/GHS training to assure compliance is covered in addition to safe use/handling.

Chemicals and other hazardous substances may have the potential for devastating effects on the user and nearby individuals, as well as property and the environment. Safety data sheets are vital in understanding a substance's hazardous properties, disposal requirements, how to safely handle/store that substance as well as many other important aspects and practices that should be in place to minimize risk. Employees who routinely use chemicals should be trained in how to safely handle them, also assuring the workplace maintains compliance with their chemical inventory.

CM Regent has various resources available on the topic, including a "Right to Know" training DVD in our Lending Library, as well as several Risk Manager newsletters related to chemical safety. Please visit our website for more information (www.cmregent.com).

Building Access + Security

by Jake Ruziecki, risk control consultant

In today's climate, it is paramount that access to your school's buildings is secure to keep faculty, staff, students and visitors safe. This can often make it challenging to maintain a balance of creating an environment that deters intruders while at the same time offering a welcoming center of community.

Building security is more than simply installing an alarm system or security cameras. Although these systems can be effective when properly used, they are far more effective when used in conjunction with an efficient system of administrative controls.

Risks

Although the FBI reported in 2018 that forcible entries to non-residences were down almost 25% from 2017, there were still more than 300,000 reported incidents in the United States with an average loss of over $10,000.

Once an unwanted intruder enters the building, your property and equipment are at risk of being stolen or vandalized, and your faculty, staff, students and visitors are at risk for violent incidents.

An intruder may not be just a common burglar. Disgruntled family members of staff or students are often reported as the perpetrators in these crime statistics.

BUILDING ACCESS + SECURITY BEST PRACTICES:

- Establish uniform procedures for visitor sign-in at each building. If not already in place, identify one main entrance for visitors. Providing assigned staff with a buzzer, intercom and security camera will allow them to speak with visitors before allowing them into the building. To further enhance entryway security, consider integrating a secondary set of secured doors to funnel visitors through the main office before they may gain access to the rest of the school.
- Consider upgrading entryways to include a proximity card access control system. This allows staff the flexibility to assign permittable time frames that individual faculty and staff members may access the building.
- Keys can often be lost, or worse, placed in unauthorized hands during special events or athletic functions when access to the facilities is needed outside of regular building hours. If your buildings still require a significant number of keys, make sure you have documentation, either on paper or electronically, listing which faculty and staff members have been issued keys to each building or rooms. Conducting an annual key audit will allow you to ensure all assigned or loaned keys have been returned after their use is no longer needed, and that any other discrepancies noted during the audit can be rectified.
- Make sure faculty and staff are trained to secure all entrances immediately after use. This includes delivery doors, maintenance entrances and exterior doors leading to playgrounds. All staff and students should be trained not to open doors for strangers. Provide additional training to faculty and staff on greeting unknown individuals in or around your schools. Challenging these individuals by asking their purpose on school property will allow you to obtain the information needed to report and confirm the individual's identity with the appropriate parties.

These systems are only as effective as the individuals involved allow them to be. Support from administration is crucial for providing adequate training and support to faculty and staff responsible for day-to-day oversight.

To get started, perform an initial audit of your buildings to identify areas for improvement and discuss these potential improvement needs with the appropriate individuals. For further assistance with this, you can contact your assigned Risk Control Consultant.

Accident *Investigations:*

TECHNIQUES TO IMPROVE INFORMATION GATHERING

By Kyle Stewart, risk control consultant

Accident investigations are only as effective as the information gathered to document a work-related injury or loss exposure. Accurate information is vital to formulate preventative measures and/or corrective actions to prevent a recurrence. Timeliness of completing accident investigations is essential to ensure accurate accounts of parties involved; incident details remain fresh in their minds pertaining to environmental conditions and work activities that may have contributed to the incident.

The purpose of accident investigations is not to place blame or find fault; rather, an opportunity to correct or modify an unsafe condition and/or work task control.

The prevention of future work-related injuries or loss exposures begins with conducting effective accident investigations.

Risks

- A formal accident investigation is not completed for each work-related injury or loss exposure; accident investigations should be completed for each incident, regardless of severity.
- The completion of the investigation is delayed; environmental conditions at the time of the incident may not be present if not completed immediately after the incident occurs. Work-related injuries and other loss exposures must be reported immediately to initiate the completion of an accident investigation.
- Accident investigation is completed to gather information to document the incident, but the organization fails to develop explicit corrective actions and/or preventative measures to prevent a recurrence. Individuals are not assigned responsibility to ensure corrective actions or preventative measures are implemented and effective in reducing the exposure to recurrent workplace injuries.
- Organization's belief that the work-related injury was an "accident" and it will not occur again.

Accident Investigation Best Practices

Accident Investigation Teams: Identify three to four individuals in each building to serve on the Accident Investigation Team; multiple individuals permit an investigation to commence even if one individual has a conflict that would prevent the immediate initiation of the investigation. Include building administration and departmental supervisors who have accountability over employees.

Timeliness:

- **STEP #1** – Injured staff member reports the incident immediately, not at the end of the day or the following day/week.
- **STEP #2** – Accident Investigation Team member is notified, and investigation commences.
- **STEP #3** – Formulate corrective actions/ preventative measures to prevent a recurrence.
- **STEP #4** – Assign individual responsibility to verify that implementation of the controls is appropriate to reduce recurrent injuries.

Evaluate the location: Effective investigations cannot be done sitting at a desk or over the phone, they also require physical evaluation of the incident location.

Word phrasing/questioning: Refrain from asking closed-ended questions that can be answered in one word. Remember, the idea is to gather details of the incident to formulate effective control measures to prevent a recurrence. The individual who conducts the investigation should limit talking as to not direct the injured parties; allow the injured parties to detail the "Who, What, When, Where and Why" responses.

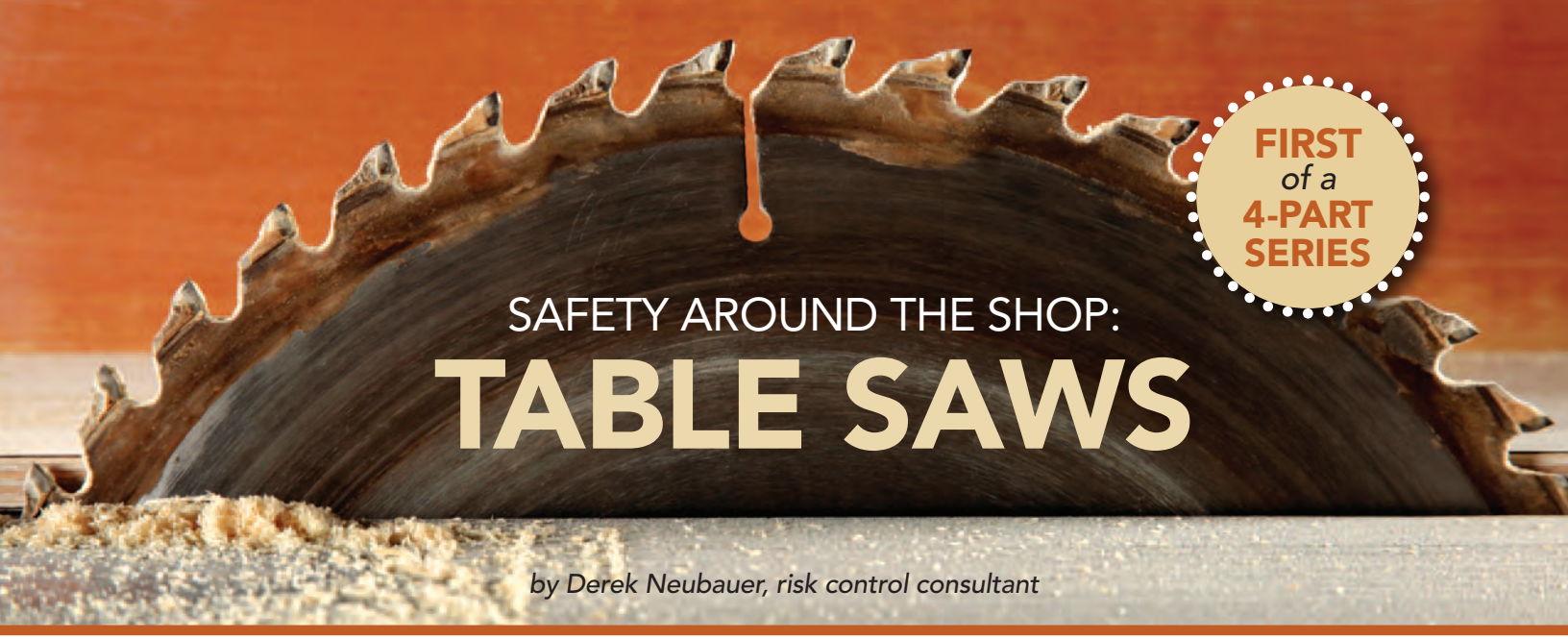
Descriptive details: Avoid using general terms to document the incident and/or location (i.e., slipped in hallway); instead document that an individual slipped stepping off a walk-off mat upon entering the building using Door #3. Obtain further details regarding environmental conditions present, time the incident occurred, footwear tread type worn and notate whether walk-off mat was saturated at the time of incident. If able, include photograph(s) as part of the report documentation.

Communicate control measures: Communicate the preventative measures and/or corrective actions to all applicable staff members, not just the injured staff member.

Follow-up evaluation: Evaluate the implemented preventative measure(s) and/or corrective action(s) to determine effectiveness; modify and implement additional controls where applicable.

Immediately report all work-related injuries or loss exposures, notify accident investigation team member to permit a formal accident investigation to commence.

Investigate EACH Incident. Regardless of injury severity, every incident should be promptly investigated and formally documented.



FIRST *of a* 4-PART SERIES

SAFETY AROUND THE SHOP: TABLE SAWS

by Derek Neubauer, risk control consultant

This is the first of a four-part series to introduce and review safety precautions for common shop equipment. First, we will discuss the table saw, which is the most visible piece of equipment in the shop and one of the most used.

Table saws are mainly used for performing rip cuts of long boards, but can be used to perform dado, cross, miter, beveled and rabbet cuts. At the high school level, the table saw can be operated by both staff (Instructor, maintenance staff) and students. At middle school/junior high school level, the table saw is mainly used by the instructor.

Risks

A recent NEISS study estimated that approximately 80,000 injuries could occur nationwide from the table saw.

The main contact injuries while using a table saw are to the fingers and hands. Cuts to the hands and fingers can result in the loss of appendages and nerve damage. Because of this, we have seen the popularity of "SawStop" brand table saws increase. The increase of these "SawStop" brands does not mean that injuries will stop occurring. They can prevent a major injury in most cases, but not all injuries.

Along with finger and hand injuries, there is a high possibility of non-contact injuries to the eye and face area from loose wood materials being released from the blade area or kickback from the material being cut. Also, respiratory injuries can occur from the amount of sawdust that can be produced.

Table Saw Safety Best Practices:

- The instructor should provide training on the equipment prior to use.
- Proper eye protection should be provided and should be used during all times of operation.
- Push sticks should be used.
- The blade guard should be used during all normal cuts.
- When dado, cross, miter, beveled and rabbet cuts are being performed, the instructor should provide direct supervision throughout the entire process.
- When alternative cuts are completed, the original blade and blade guard should be installed.
- When not in use, the blade should be wound below the surface of the table.
- All portable table saws should meet all above requirements of shop table saws.

With the use of proper training, personal protective equipment and required machine guarding, the table saw will remain a very popular and effective piece of wood equipment.

The NEISS study can be found at CPSC.org.