SUMMER 2020

RISK manager

INSIDE...

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ALLERGIC REACTIONS:

ADMINISTERING AN EPINEPHRINE AUTO-INJECTOR

By Kyle Stewart, risk control consultant

Medical emergencies can arise from allergic reactions to food or stinging/biting insects. The severity can range from a minor irritation to a severe medical emergency, dependent upon the individual(s) own susceptibility. Risk mitigation strategies can include individual/group awareness and implementing response procedures to include administering first aid and/or an epinephrine auto-injector.

An epinephrine auto-injector prescribed to an individual experiencing an allergic reaction can be safely administered by individuals who are properly trained. The Pennsylvania Public School Code was amended in 2014 to allow educational entities to train school employees in the recognition of anaphylaxis and administration of epinephrine auto-injectors to students.

RISKS

Allergic reactions can occur in classrooms, exterior grounds, lunchrooms or off-site while attending extracurricular activities. Knowing the signs of anaphylaxis and being prepared to initiate first aid measures is essential.

- An epinephrine auto-injector should only be administered by individuals who are trained on the use and administering of first aid measures in accordance with policy adopted by your school directors.
- Individuals with a known allergy to food or stinging insects should inform co-workers/acquaintances of their allergy should administration of a prescribed epinephrine auto-injector be required.
- Be cognizant when placing hand(s) or playing near locations where stinging insects may build nests (i.e., under playground equipment, recessed door grabs on exterior doors, pollinating shrubs/flowers, etc.).

BEST PRACTICES

- Develop, implement and communicate applicable board policy identifying staff members permitted to administer first aid and/or epinephrine when warranted.
- School personnel who are responsible for the storage and administration of epinephrine must successfully complete a training approved by the Pennsylvania Department of Health. At a minimum, this training should be provided at least every two years.
- School personnel who are trained and designated to administer epinephrine should annually review and conduct a hands-on demonstration of school-specific policies and procedures.
- Train school employees in the recognition of signs/symptoms of anaphylaxis and administration of epinephrine auto-injectors to students.
- Common signs and symptoms of anaphylaxis include: rash with hives, itching, throat swelling/tightness, difficulty swallowing or irregular heartbeat.
- Retain and review allergy documentation records. Encourage staff and students to inform applicable personnel of known allergies (i.e., insects, food, etc.) for which epinephrine has been prescribed.
- Require a student's parent/guardian to provide written authorization for trained personnel to administer an epinephrine auto-injector following an allergic incident.
- Maintain a log of epinephrine auto-injector supplies located within each school building. Designated personnel (i.e., building nurse or other designee) should document the administration and disposal of expired auto-injectors.
- Periodically survey areas such as playground equipment or recessed door grabs on exterior doors for the presence of nests of stinging insects that may be disturbed by students or staff. If a stinging insect nest is found, restrict access to the area until corrective actions have been taken to remove the hazard.
- Grounds staff should wear light colored clothing that covers exposed skin on arms and legs while conducting weed trimming activities in habitats preferred by stinging insects to build ground nests (i.e., under bushes, tall grass, etc.).

Refer to the Pennsylvania Department of Health's website for guidance/additional resources on approved training courses on Epinephrine Auto-injector Administration Training for School Employees.

KNOWING WHEN TO ASK FOR ASSISTANCE

By Edgar Boord, risk control consultant

A number of everyday tasks, especially if they are physically demanding, can put an individual at risk for injury if safe practices are not carried out. Those safe practices often involve requesting assistance from a qualified individual or just having others available to safely perform a task together.

Timeliness expectations and workloads can create the desire to hurry a task along. This is often a circumstance that leads to cut corners and an increased likelihood of an incident. Incident potential can often be lowered with patience and asking for help when it is needed.

RISKS

Heavy lifting tasks can often result in back and other muscle strain injuries, even when performing proper lifting procedures. Repetitive lifting tasks also increase the risk of strain injuries. This is especially true when they involve twisting, bending, reaching or working in uncomfortable positions.

Hazard potential can be greatly increased when performing tasks without the proper tools or equipment that allow work to be conducted safely. Improper use of chairs, tables or desks in lieu of a step stool or ladder create an unnecessary level of risk for what can often be a simple task.

The use of some tools and equipment have significant associated hazards such as chainsaws, man lifts and other mobile equipment. Risk can be further increased in foot traffic areas or near building structures.

Situations such as student altercations or aggressive behavior can often cause injury to employees who become involved and try to intervene without waiting for assistance.

HAZARDOUS TASK BEST PRACTICES

- Use a "buddy system" or wait for access to proper equipment when heavy or awkwardly-weighted items need to be lifted or moved. You should know your own physical limitations as well as any maximum lift limits in your position's job description.
- Asking co-workers to help with repetitive lifting tasks can greatly lower the risk.
- If you need to access out-of-reach items or storage, always wait for a step stool or ladder to become available. Depending on your school's policy, this may involve contacting the appropriate personnel with the resources to safely perform the task for you.
- Many tasks should require multiple individuals to visually assist and make sure an area is clear of foot traffic or other hazards. These tasks can include:
  - Cutting trees/limbs, operating a hoist/jib crane or welding and other hot work.
  - Operating powered/mobile equipment, especially while transporting large/bulky materials that may obstruct the operator's view.
- Request assistance before performing tasks containing severe and/or multiple types of hazards (i.e., operating a chainsaw, working at heights or conducting electrical work).
- If possible, wait for another co-worker to assist before intervening in student altercations or the display of aggressive behavior. Solo intervention can greatly increase your risk of injury.

Daily responsibilities and deadlines can create stresses that often lead to rushed work duties. This can result in cutting corners and overlooking safety considerations. It is important to take a few seconds before starting a new task to consider the risks and if having an extra hand or set of eyes might be beneficial. Taking that extra time to get help can be the difference between going home to your loved ones or going to the emergency room due to an injury.

by Jake Ruziecki, risk control consultant

Evaluate driver history to keep your fleet in safe hands

When you think of preventing workplace injuries and deaths, what hazards usually come to mind? Violence? Exposure to harmful substances? Slips, trips and falls, or falls from heights? While these are all the most likely areas of concern when it comes to preventing accidents in the workplace, in fact, the U.S Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that the highest cause of workplace-related deaths in 2017 were from motor vehicle accidents.

Although motor vehicle needs may vary from operation to operation, it is important not to downplay your own risk control needs simply because you're located in a small community or your fleet operations are not large compared to other organizations.

Risks

Similar to how you already protect your operations by requiring background checks and clearances for prospective employees, the same practice should be followed in respect to obtaining prospective and existing drivers' motor vehicle record histories. Obtaining and reviewing motor vehicle records allows you to ensure that the driving history of prospective or existing employees will not result in the endangerment of staff, students and other drivers on the road.

When you consider every individual responsible for operating a district vehicle, this might include facilities and grounds, IT, teachers and/or coaches. Although most of these individuals may not be responsible for transporting students, their driving history and behavior is just as critical to your operations as a bus driver's record would be.

As an example, a large construction company inspects every chain link on a crane used to lift steel beams before each lift. If this routine inspection finds an inadequate link, they are able to replace the component immediately to prevent an accident from occurring. Now imagine that another construction company uses the same crane system to lift air units on top of single-story buildings. This company uses their crane less frequently, and the lifts are much smaller. This leads them to believe that they don't need to follow the same inspection guidelines as the larger company, due to their smaller operation.

Which construction company do you think will eventually have a more serious accident occur? You can use this example to think of each individual that operates a district vehicle as a link in a chain, and although other districts may have a larger fleet or "crane operation," each link in the chain is critical to preventing an accident.

Best Practices

Check with your state's department of transportation. Most states may allow free or reduced fees on motor vehicle record checks for drivers employed by educational institutions.

For existing student transportation drivers—including school bus drivers and teachers, coaches and faculty that may transport small groups of students—motor vehicle records should be checked on an annual basis and in conjunction with any involvement in an accident. For existing non-student transportation drivers—such as kitchen, administration and facilities and grounds staff—records should be checked on a once every three year basis and in conjunction with any involvement in an accident.

Once you have obtained your motor vehicle records, you can use the guidelines below to determine when a driver's record becomes marginal or poor. Based on accident/violation history, an individual's driver record becomes marginal or poor if one or more of the following exists:

- Three or more accidents (regardless of fault) in the last three years.
- One or more Type A violations in the last three years.
- Any combination of accidents and Type B violations that equal four or more in the last three years.

Designation of Type A and Type B violations is based on a survey of state point systems. Violations receiving the higher number of points are classed as Type A.

Type A Violations

- Driving while intoxicated.
- Driving under the influence of drugs.
- Negligent homicide arising out of the use of a motor vehicle.
- Using a motor vehicle for the commission of a felony.
- Aggravated assault with a motor vehicle.
- Permitting an unlicensed person to drive.
- Reckless driving.
- Speed contest.
- Hit and run (BI and PD) driving.

Type B Violations

- All moving violations not listed as Type A violations.

These guidelines should be uniformly applied to all drivers. Management should establish and distribute to all employees operating motor vehicles the guidelines for evaluating their records, including the consequences of falling into the marginal or poor review category.

Obtaining motor vehicle records and evaluating a driver's history is a critical part in reducing the risk of motor vehicle accidents, injuries and deaths. Remember that no organization, fleet or community is too small to have a safe vehicle fleet. Each of your drivers are critical to the safety of you staff, students and community members.

For further assistance with questions pertaining to obtaining and evaluating motor vehicle records, you can contact the Risk Control consultant assigned to your policies.

NOTE: Motor Vehicle Records can be obtained by educational institutions from the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation at no charge. To have Internet access to check motor vehicle records:

1. Go to **www.dmv.state.pa.us**.
2. On top of the page, hold cursor on **"Information center."**
3. In the drop-down menu, click on **"Business Partners."**
4. On the right, click on **"Online Driver History Request Service for Business."**
5. On the right, click on **"Government Agency Internet Application/License Agreement."**
6. **Fill out, print and mail** to the address on application.

Wet Bulb Globe Temperature

AND SUMMERTIME PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

By Mark Nease, risk control consultant

Staff and students who work or practice outside in the summertime are at an elevated risk for sustaining a heat-related illness.

Meteorologists provide anticipated daily and hourly weather and temperature forecasts for a given region. These forecasts during warm summer months may also include a heat index, which is how hot it feels when the temperature is combined with the relative humidity.

There is a lesser-known temperature measurement that Industrial Hygienists, the U.S. Military or even you can use to measure anticipated effects of heat (in degrees Fahrenheit) that a person may feel during physical work. This is called a **Wet Bulb Globe Temperature (WBGT)**.

A WBGT is a measurement of several parameters taken in direct sunlight, including the current temperature, wind speed, sun angle, relative humidity and the cloud cover (solar radiation). The WBGT is therefore a more accurate measure of heat than the heat index. Just like with the heat index, the WBGT can be calculated with a mathematical formula. See "Additional Resources" for more information on this calculation. Alternatively, the WBGT can also be measured with a device called a WBGT meter, which can give you an up-to-the-moment digital readout of the WBGT wherever used.

RISKS

Use of the WBGT, and heat illness preventive actions based on those measures, can be vital to the safety of staff and students who work (including athletics' practice) outside. Heat illnesses range in varying degrees, including:

- **Heat rash:** Skin irritations that are a result of excessive sweating.
- **Heat syncope:** That light-headed feeling a person gets after prolonged standing or after suddenly rising from a seated position.
- **Heat cramps:** Spastic contractions of muscles and muscle cramping due to the body's depletion of minerals and fluids.
- **Heat exhaustion:** The elevation of the body's core temperature, which is a serious condition.
- **Heat stroke:** The body becoming unable to eliminate heat and regulate its core temperature, which can become fatal.

BEST PRACTICES

- **Monitor environmental conditions:** Consider the use of a WBGT meter to take immediate measurements during school grounds maintenance or athletic field practice in the summertime, especially during possible heat waves.
- **Acclimatization:** A practice of conditioning people to ease them into the warm work environment so their bodies can adapt/build a tolerance to heat stress-demand. The National Athletic Trainers' Association (NATA) has a resource available regarding Pre-Season Heat Acclimatization Guidelines for Secondary School Athletics. See: https://natajournals.org/doi/pdf/10.4085/1062-6050-44.3.332
- **Administrative controls:** The use of administrative controls, such as the scheduling of tasks in early morning or in the evening, rotating staff from outside work to inside work to reduce the unit time exposure and allowing frequent rest breaks per hour, can help reduce a person's exposure to outside heat.
- **Training:** Educate people on the different types of heat stress and their symptoms and what they should do to overcome the heat illness. Remind staff that their body's physiology has an impact on their ability to cope with heat. Medications, foods/beverages, physical condition, age and other factors can also affect the way a person deals with heat exposure.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

https://www.osha.gov/dts/osta/otm/otm_iii/otm_iii_4.html

https://www.weather.gov/tsa/wbgt

SAFETY AROUND THE SHOP:

GRINDERS

SECOND of a 4-PART SERIES

by Derek Neubauer, risk control consultant

This is the second of a four-part series to introduce and review safety precautions that should be taken for the most used equipment in the shops. In this issue, we will discuss grinders, including pedestal, bench and portable (angle) grinders.

Grinders are used to sharpen cutting tools and to roughly shape metal. Angle grinders are used for abrasive cutting and polishing. At the high school level, the grinder can be used by both staff (instructor, maintenance staff) and students in maintenance shops, wood shops, metal shops, STEAM labs and art rooms. At middle school/junior high school level, the grinders are mainly used by the instructor. Injuries can include cuts, amputation, and eye, head and foot injuries.

Risks

Contact injuries are the most common type of injury. This occurs when a body part comes in contact with the grinding wheel. Eye and face injuries can occur from the lack of guarding, improper use/selection of personal protective equipment and entanglement with gloves or improper clothing during use.

Improper installation and selection of wheels are also a risk. This could allow the wheel to release should it be improperly installed or not rated for the speed of the grinder.

Portable or angle grinders present even more risks due to the placement of other body parts when the wheel is running.

Grinder Safety Best Practices

- The instructor should provide training on the equipment prior to use.
- Proper eye protection and face shields should be provided and used during all times of operation.
- Work rests should be installed and kept within 1/8-inch of the grinding wheel.
- Always use safety guard that covers a minimum of one-half the grinding wheel.
- Don't ever exceed the maximum operating speed established for the wheel.
- Allow newly mounted wheels to run at operating speed, with guard in place, for at least one minute before grinding.
- Don't grind material for which the wheel is not designed.
- Grinding wheels should be ring tested before installation.
- For angle grinders, always use two hands, allow the grinder to "run-up" to grinding speed before use, have the work at waist level when possible, and allow grinding wheel to stop before setting the grinder down.

With the use of proper training, personal protective equipment and required machine guarding, the grinders will remain an integral part of the school's vocational program.

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300 Sterling Parkway, Suite 100
Mechanicsburg, PA 17050
Toll-free 844-480-0709
CMRegent.com

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