Safety Tip of the Month

RECOGNIZING HAZARDS

Health and safety hazards exist in every workplace. The best way to protect yourself and your staff is to recognize and prevent hazards in your workplace.

This month Risk Management would like to highlight features of the hazard recognition process, some common hazards and corrective measures.

Why is Hazard Recognition Important?

Recognizing hazards is an integral step in addressing the overall safety of an environment. Additionally, in order to maintain an effective educational program, it is important that a safe learning and teaching environment exists in the school.

On-the-job injuries lead to workers’ compensation claims, which generally account for 60% or more of all claims to educational entities. Workers’ compensation claims can have an adverse impact on an educational entity’s operating budget.

Where You Fit In The Process: Administrators & Staff

Administrators are encouraged to monitor site activities by walking your dedicated areas. If you are an administrator at a school site, walk your school’s hallways and campus. Implement a simplified method of hazard recognition into your current daily workload to allow for a balanced work schedule. Staff need to report hazards and abide by the safety requirements set forth by administration and safety experts.

Corrective Measures

The Hazard Recognition process includes not only the identification of key hazardous exposures but also the necessary steps to minimize or eliminate high risk situations. Site administrators must take corrective measures for each hazardous exposure identified. These corrective measures include:

- Removing the hazard, barricading or guarding against the hazard, warning others of the hazard, using protective equipment or other safety devices where appropriate, providing hazard recognition training for other staff members.
- Staff members are responsible for following the prescribed corrective measures when provided.

Leading Types of Injuries to Staff

By reviewing numerous injury claims from educational employees, safety experts are able to categorize injuries. 70% of all losses for workplace injuries on educational campuses can be categorized into 3 types:

1.) Exertion (Lifting): Examples of exertion injuries include lifting or lowering objects, moving furniture, lifting audio visual equipment, assisting students, handling text books or school supplies, twisting during a work activity, or bending over to pick up or lower an item.

2.) Slip/Trip/Fall: Examples include slipping on foreign materials on the floor, tripping over an object, stepping in a hole, or falling from an elevated height.

3.) Struck by: Examples of struck-by injuries are running into something, getting your hand stuck in a door, struck by something falling off a shelf, or being accidentally or intentionally struck by a student.

Moving Large Loads

Often times, staff are required to move large amounts of school related materials. Whether it involves moving things from a vehicle to a room or between rooms, this can be a high risk activity. To avoid serious injury, always provide and use hand carts or other mechanical aids to move objects. For heavy or bulky loads, seek assistance before moving the load.

Building Entrances

In educational environments, building entrances statistically are the most common causes of injuries in these locations. Often injuries are a result from a slip and fall on a wet floor, slip and fall from foreign debris on floor or tripping over the curled edges of a mat. Issues like these can be prevented by providing matting to prevent the tracking in of water, cleaning up water &/or liquids immediately, prompt sweeping of areas with debris (dirt, sand, etc.), replacement of older mats with mats which have beveled edging.

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Brush Fire Advisory (Continued)

Do not rely on dust masks for protection. Paper “comfort” or “dust” masks commonly found at hardware stores are designed to trap large particles, such as sawdust. These masks will not protect your lungs from the small particles found in wildfire smoke.

Visit www.airnow.gov for information on current Air Quality Index of your city.

OSHA’s
5 Types of Workplace Hazards Defined:

Safety Hazards: Safety Hazards are unsafe working conditions that can cause injury, illness and death. Safety hazards are the most common workplace hazards.

Biological Hazards: Biological Hazards include exposure to harm or disease associated with working with animals, people, or infectious plant materials.

Physical Hazards: Physical hazards can be any factors within the environment that can harm the body without necessarily touching it.

Ergonomic Hazards: Occur when the type of work, body positions and working conditions put a strain on your body.

Chemical Hazards: Are present when a worker is exposed to any chemical preparation in the workplace in any form (solid, liquid or gas).

Safety Hazards:

Defined:

RECOGNIZING HAZARDS (continued)

Classrooms & General Office Areas

In a classroom and administrative office areas, there are various potential hazards that can be identified. Here are some common hazards found in these spaces and ways to identify them:

Falling from a chair or desk while standing on it:

Look into the working area to see if the items are placed on the wall or from the ceiling. This will alert you that staff members are working at elevated heights when hanging items. Make sure staff are using a ladder or step stool when hanging the objects. Staff members should have easy access to the ladder or step stool and should be provided training on their use.

Tripping over computer and power cables around the desk:

Pay close attention to the location of the audio visual equipment power cords.

Tripping over books or supplies that are on the floor:

Look at the floor area of a space to determine if there is sufficient room for staff, teachers, and students to move around.

Struck by an object falling off bookshelf or storage shelf:

Observe the organization of the storage room and shelves. Storage of heavy items on top shelves should be avoided. The best location for heavy items should be on lower shelves between knee and shoulder heights. Remember, orderly housekeeping is crucial in eliminating trip hazards and struck-by injuries.

Hallways & Restrooms

Just like building entrances, hallways and restrooms also have potential areas of concern and need to be addressed. Good walk-off mats are effective for sand, dirt, and water. Be alert for badly worn mats and replace them. Properly secure cords and cables. NEVER use metal ties to secure electrical wiring. Run cables on the ground around the perimeter of the room. If cables must run across pedestrian walkways, use the proper cord raceway. Move or erect a barrier around boxes or supplies that are temporarily placed in hallways if they cannot be relocated. Good housekeeping is the only real way to keep hallways and restrooms, accident free.

Stairways

Always utilize hand rails when ascending and descending stairs. Descending stairs is the more hazardous action when traversing up and down stairs. Caution people about carrying bulky items down a set of stairs. This activity is extremely hazardous by itself, but add foreign debris or water on the stairway and an accident is just waiting to happen. Lack of knowledge of the hazard, or obstructed vision on stairways are major contributors to slip and fall injuries. Staff and administrators should always be aware of their surroundings, especially when in motion. Looking down at a cell phone while walking can be a dangerous practice.

Site Grounds

Here are several problem areas found on campus grounds and some preventative steps to help keep the area accident free.

Potholes:

Report potholes (especially in high pedestrian areas) to the proper LACOE representative, so that they may be filled.

Missing or Broken Control Valve Covers

Monitor covers that are in common paths of travel; look for damaged or missing covers or shields. If you notice one is missing or damaged, replace it immediately to avoid injury.

Ditches: Make sure washed-out ditches or drainage ways are marked with warning tape and then re-filled as soon as possible.

Cracked, Broken, Uneven Walkways/Sidewalks

Maintain walkways and sidewalks. Repair broken or uneven surfaces. Damage to sidewalks may be found where large trees grow adjacent to the sidewalk, where utilities are located in the sidewalk, or where heavy equipment or trucks routinely travel over a section of the sidewalk. If immediate repair is not available, temporarily block the area &/or highlight the uneven surface to make the area more visible to pedestrians (bright paint & signage).

Unofficial Walkways

These are paths that are not intended to be a walkway, such as paths through the landscaping or short cuts across a grassy area. Staff are not to use these areas as a walkway.

Loose Gravel

Gravel can cause a slip or fall accident because it moves and shifts. When walking on a gravel surface, employees should slow their pace and shorten their stride. It is recommended that you avoid creating walkways or parking areas using loose gravel.

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