School Worker Safety Meeting Kit



What's At Stake

School staff are all too frequently exposed to risks whilst in the workplace. These risks include accidental injuries such as slips, trips and falls and burns, shocks or strains from lifting or operating improperly maintained equipment. A large proportion of the risks that school staff are exposed to derive from pupils and their parents, with physical assault perpetrated by students or their parents being a common cause of injury to staff members.

What's the Danger

COMMON SCHOOL SAFETY CONCERNS

Stairs. Students and staff are often in a rush during the school day. They move from classroom to classroom, from the cafeteria to the gym. If they use the stairs, then they often forget to use the handrails. A trip or fall on steps can result in a serious injury.

Snow and ice. Wet weather creates wet floors indoors. A scraper mat can help reduce risk. But many slip incidents happen in the first 15-20 feet past the mat.

Ladders. Students staff face the risk of falling from ladders on older playgrounds. Staff may use older ladders that aren't in good condition. A few even opt not use a ladder when working at height, unsafely using a chair or desk instead.

Elevation. It only takes one quarter of an inch difference between surfaces to trip. Uneven sidewalks, doorways or carpeting can cause people to trip between thresholds.

Slick surfaces. Cafeterias are home to food-related spills. Slip risks include oily floors in a kitchen, spilled food and even squashed ketchup and mayo packets.

CANCER CONCERNS FOR STAFF AND STUDENTS

Cancer caused by UV rays from the sun is easily preventable. Schools play an important role in providing environments that protect, children, teachers, volunteers and staff. They also have a role in sharing sun protection knowledge and skills. Exposure to UV radiation is a recognised hazard for people who spend all or part of their working days outside – including teachers.

BULLYING

A behavior policy about bullying must be in place so all staff should be informed that certain forms of bullying is illegal and be reported to police which include:

- violence or assault
- theft
- hate crimes
- repeated harassment or intimidation (name calling, threats, and abusive phone calls, emails)

HOW SCHOOL WORKERS AVOID INJURIES

Encourage staff to "Play with Purpose". Participating in physical activities puts teachers, paraprofessionals and coaches at risk for serious injuries. Instruct staff to focus on demonstrating and teaching skills versus actively participating. Remind them that they are responsible for their own safety.

Promote an approach to deal with school violence. School violence is a broad term that includes overt aggressive behaviors such as physical fights on campus, bullying (including online bullying or cyber-bullying), physical assault, bombing, arson, or other deliberate means of causing harm to the staff and students. Sadly, it includes rare, tragic, devastating school shootings. In addition, school violence includes more covert behaviors that diminish school safety such as threats of injury at school, weapons possession, and harassment.

Prepare your body with stretches – Get Fit and Exercise. Repetitive stress injuries from writing on white boards, grading papers, reading and bending down are common among school staff. Taking just 10 minutes to stretch your wrists, shoulders, and back before the workday can prepare your muscles and provide stress relief!

Tell staff to get up and move. Employees who stay in a static position all day long put themselves at greater risk for strain and sprain injuries. Encourage them to take short breaks throughout the day to move around. They can use this warm up and stretching poster for ideas of movements that will help them avoid strains.

Prevent slips and falls. Snow- and ice-related slips and falls are a leading cause of school employee injuries. Remind your employees about the increased risk of slips and falls in winter, and how to prevent them with an educational campaign throughout the season.

School Employee Wellness. Fostering the physical and mental health of school employees also helps to support students' health and academic success. Every school employee, no matter the role they play, contributes to a school's mission.

SCHOOL EMPLOYEE WELLNESS PROGRAMS

- Improve staff retention and productivity.
- Decrease employee absenteeism.
- Decrease employee health care costs.

Strategies schools can use to create an employee wellness program.

- Gather data and information to determine the nutrition and physical activity needs of school staff members and assess the availability of existing school employee wellness activities and resources.
- Encourage administrative support for staff involvement in school employee wellness.
- Develop, carry out, and evaluate healthy eating and physical activity programs for all school employees.

TAKEAWAY SUMMARY OF SCHOOL WORKER SAFETY

- Be aware of potential slips, trips, and falls at school.
- Practice good ergonomics.
- Use proper lifting techniques when lifting supplies and other materials.
- Practice good hygiene to control potential infections.
- Be prepared for accidents and emergencies while you are on the job.
- Workplace violence at schools is a concern for all school workers.

FINAL WORD

School workers including administrators, teachers, aides, secretaries, food service, and maintenance workers keep schools safe and enriching for school-age children. Know the potential hazards of your school workplace.