



New York State School Safety Group 491

Safe Schools Agenda

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Route to:

- Superintendent
- School Business Off.
- Athletic Director
- Supt. Bldgs/Grounds
- Site Administrators
- Transportation Dir.
- Lunch Director
- Classroom Teachers
- _____

A monthly service provided to help you with your efforts to make your school safe for students, staff and the public

Some Ideas on Tightening Up Your Risk Management Practices

This is a good time of year, before the crush of budget preparation gets too intense, to review your risk management practices and develop a plan to make any needed improvements. If there are any budget implications, you will be in good shape to provide for them in the new budget. Here are some suggestions:

1. **Read your insurance policies.** Make sure that you have a clear understanding of coverage terms and conditions. Make a list of questions and discuss them with your agent/broker or your underwriter.
2. **Prepare for renewal of your policies** by reviewing coverages and deductibles with your broker. Your underwriter(s) will appreciate your prompt response with accurate risk exposure data.
3. **Take a look at the organization of your claims files** to make sure that they are in order.
4. While you are at it, **look for suspicious trends** in injuries and accidents, whether their root cause has been analyzed and that corrective action has been taken.
5. **Initiate an ongoing dialogue with managers of other departments:** share your concerns and data on injuries and accidents with them, and find out what their risk management concerns are.
6. **Look for new risks and exposures** that need to be addressed in your overall risk management program.

Lessons from OSHA's Top Ten Violations

OSHA reports that it's continuing to increase the issuance of citations for hazard violations. For the most part, the hazards cited are not new. The vast majority of injuries on the job are caused by human failures such as taking shortcuts or ignoring safety standards. Use OSHA's top seven to enhance your risk management review.

1. **Scaffolding:** Employers are responsible for protecting workers from falls and falling objects while working on or near scaffolding at heights of 10 feet or more.
2. **Hazard Communication:** Failure to develop a written program, maintain training, have a MSDS sheet for each hazardous chemical, or to appropriately label each chemical.
3. **Fall Protection:** Failure to provide fall protection such as guardrails, safety net or personal fall arrest systems.
4. **Lockout/Tagout:** Failure to establish a program, develop procedures for energy control of machinery under repair, lack of employee training and periodic inspections.
5. **Respiratory Protection:** Program administration, procedures, respirator selection, training, fit testing, etc.
6. **Electrical Wiring:** Grounding of electrical equipment, wiring and insulation.
7. **Machine Guarding:** Placement of guards over or in front of a machine's moving parts.

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Workplace Stress and Violence Prevention

Our concerns in the 1980's and 1990's about job stress have been replaced by concerns about preventing violent acts perpetrated by students or outsiders. It is important, however, to remember that staff members can be victims of workplace violence brewed up by job stress. Job stress is one of the top ten work-related health problems in the U.S. Job stress and violence are often related: many incidents of workplace violence result from work-related stress.

Consider: Between 1987 and 1992 one in six violent crimes occurred in the workplace. (U.S. Department of Justice) Workplace violence has increased to the point of being the third leading cause of death on the job. (NIOSH)

We all live in a time of rapid technological and social change which has created highly stressful lifestyles and a dramatic increase in stress-related diseases such as hypertension and coronary disease. Teachers and administrators have had to add new externally generated pressures for achievement and accountability to the psychological mix. Their positions involving interpersonal contacts make them especially vulnerable to increased pulse rates and higher blood pressure.

Managing workplace stress can help build and maintain a healthy and productive staff, and at the same time work to prevent workplace violence. There are three ways to attack the problem. The first is to help staff members cope with stress; the second is to take direct action to resolve stressful conditions; and the third is to focus on continual improvement in organizational climate.

Remember the workshops on stress and the employee satisfaction surveys of the 1980's and 1990's? Maybe it's time to revive them. In addition, consider programs to help individuals identify and control stress by teaching meditation and relaxation strategies, developing positive attitude and improving exercise and diet. Promoting worksite health programs is a key way to effectively manage job-related stress.

Reducing staff member vulnerability to stress won't be enough, however, if the workplace itself is dysfunctional. Reducing that vulnerability and preventing violence ranging from offensive language to physical and verbal assault to intimidation, etc. requires a focus on prevention. Work at building a work environment based on mutual respect. Deal with conflicts through open discussions, effective communication and conflict resolution strategies. Address unacceptable behaviors through effective evaluation policies. Approach grievances in a problem-solving mode.

Provide counseling for those with poor work attitude or performance, and for those who are laid off or terminated. Recognize that these are traumatic experiences.

Stress is a common denominator in factors contributing to workplace violence. Identification and management of stress-inducing factors is essential for risk management of violence prevention. Stress factors accumulate when not attended to. Early identification and open communication can alleviate job stress and avert violence. But it requires management and staff commitment.