

# Professional Underwriters

## Safe Schools Agenda

**Route to:**

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

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

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### Breaking the Cycle of Slips, Trips and Falls

The National Safety Council has designated June as National Safety Month, and has cited this topic as one of four which should be emphasized. Slips, trips and falls (STF) continue to be a major cause of injuries in the workplace. Why haven't we solved this problem? Is it complacency? Can't we figure out how to prevent these accidents? Or is it because we make the same mistakes over and over, and don't really implement the solutions?

The majority of STF injuries occur on walks, staircases, balconies, ramps, and in parking lots. Hazardous conditions that contribute to STF include slippery surfaces, uneven surfaces, debris on walking surfaces, inadequate lighting, missing handrails on staircases and ramps, poor maintenance of surface, and adverse weather conditions. Your standard inspection form should address each of these factors.

A comprehensive prevention program would include: a policy statement conveying management's commitment; the scope of activity, responsibility and accountability; and the safety professional's role, authority and standards. It should also include the criteria that should be used for reviewing all walking surfaces. This starts with conformance to requirements of local and state building codes. Maintenance standards and procedures should be established, along with inspection standards and schedules. Employee footwear for areas such as kitchens, boiler rooms and garages should be specified.

Recommendations for reconditioning and retrofitting timetables should be developed in anticipation that floors will wear out, or not meet review and acceptance criteria. Having the right floor for the specific environment requires looking at:

- ✎ What activities will be performed on this floor
- ✎ Whether visitors will be walking on this floor
- ✎ What contaminants are foreseen
- ✎ Whether the floor will be exposed to weather
- ✎ What monitoring and maintenance is required
- ✎ Whether mats, rugs, or runners will be used
- ✎ Whether any equipment will be pushed or driven over this floor.

Emphasize that spills must always be cleaned up quickly, and that warning signs are utilized. Make sure that all employees consider this to be part of their responsibilities, rather than "filing a work order." The person noticing the spill should protect it, and await the custodian or clean-up person, and guide others around the spill. The clean-up person should use pylons, ropes and "Caution Wet Floor" signs to cordon off the spill. If a cleaner is needed, only those compatible with your other floor maintenance products should be used. Otherwise, the slip-resistance of the floor may be reduced or lost.

Establish and monitor a daily inspection protocol and keep the inspection reports on file. Likewise, establish and conduct procedures for finding out the cause of each STF. Was it a slip, did the person faint, or was it brought on by some other medical condition? What were the physical conditions of the floor or stairway, the lighting, etc? What kind of shoe sole was being worn by the victim? Witnesses should be taken aside and their names, addresses and account of the accident documented. This is a critical part of the loss prevention process – finding out the root cause of the accident. Calling it an "accident" is not acceptable.

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## Ergonomics: Computer Stations

**Take a few minutes to check your workstation(s) and your posture at your desk(s). Faulty ergonomics can significantly increase fatigue level at the end of the day – and they are so easy to fix.**

### Work Posture

- Are head and neck upright or in line with the torso (not bent down or back)?
- Do head, neck, and trunk face forward (not twisted)?
- Is the trunk perpendicular to the floor (may lean back into backrest but not forward)?
- Are shoulders and upper arms in line with the torso, perpendicular to the floor, and relaxed?
- Are upper arms and elbows close to the body (not extended outward)?
- Are forearms, wrists, and hands straight and in line?
- Are wrists and hands straight (not bent up, down, or sideways)?
- Are thighs parallel to the floor and the lower legs roughly perpendicular to the floor?
- Are feet resting flat on the floor or supported by a stable footrest?
- Do computer users alternate computer tasks and other activities or take short breaks to reduce fatigue?

### Chair

- Does the backrest support the lower back (lumbar area)?
- Does the depth and width of the seat pan accommodate the user (seat pan not too big or small)?
- Is there a space between the seat pan and the back of the knees and lower legs (seat pan not too long)?
- Is the seat pan cushioned and rounded with a “waterfall” front (no sharp edge)?
- Do armrests, if used, support the forearms and not restrict movement?

### Keyboard and Pointing Device

- Is the keyboard platform stable and large enough to hold a keyboard and a pointing device?
- Is the pointing device next to the keyboard so it can be operated without reaching?
- Is the pointing device easy to activate and does it fit the hand comfortably?
- Do the wrists and hands rest on surfaces that are not sharp or hard?

### Monitor

- Is the top of the screen at or below eye level so that it can be read without bending the neck?
- Can those who wear bifocal or trifocal lenses read the screen without bending their necks?
- Does the monitor distance allow one to read the screen without leaning forward or backward?
- Is the monitor directly in front of the user?
- Is the screen free from glare from windows or other light sources?

### Desk or Other Work Surface

- Is there enough space between the top of the user’s thighs and the work surface or keyboard platform so that the thighs are not trapped?
- Is there enough space under the work surface for the legs and feet so that the user can get close enough to the keyboard to type comfortably?

### Accessories

- Is the document holder stable and large enough to hold documents?
- Is the document holder about the same height and distance from the user as the monitor screen?
- Are palm rests padded and free of sharp or square edges?
- Do palm rests allow the forearms, wrists, and hands to remain in a straight line?
- Can a telephone be used with the head upright (not bent) and the shoulders relaxed?