



450 Veterans Drive
 Burlington, New Jersey 08018
 Phone (609) 386-6000
 Fax (609) 386-8877
www.njsbaig.org

New Jersey School Boards Association Insurance Group

Outdoor Hazards

They're out there, waiting. And if you're not careful, they're going to get you! They fly, crawl, grow on trees, fall from the sky, and are found underfoot. They are virtually all around. They are outdoor hazards.

Many occupations require people to be outdoors at least part of the time. Since some environmental elements cannot be controlled, it's important to be prepared for outdoor hazards and know how to deal with them.

The lay of the land

- Uneven surfaces, wet grass, and mud can make for dangerous driving. Be careful when maneuvering vehicles over rough terrain.
- Holes in the ground can cause trips or falls. Make sure they are identified and filled in.
- Man-made terrain hazards also pose certain dangers from nature. Water can accumulate, creating a drowning hazard. According to OSHA, excavations must be inspected after every rainstorm.
- Hazards can be found overhead, as well. Always remember to keep track of where any power lines might be.

Weather

High winds, pounding rains, and lightning strikes are all factors that can lead to occupational mishaps. When bad weather threatens, it's best to stay indoors. However, even a bright sunny day can be a problem if it's too hot. Remember the following to avoid



heat stress disorders:

- Drink plenty of fluids even if you are not thirsty. Avoid alcohol and caffeine - they stimulate fluid loss.
- Schedule work during cooler periods of the day.

Plants



- Each year, poison ivy, poison oak, and poison sumac cause almost 2 million cases of dermatitis. Know how to identify these plants and avoid all contact with them. It is also a good idea to wear long-sleeved shirts, boots, and gloves.
- Remember that a casual wipe from a contaminated glove or breathing smoke from burning leaves can have the same effect as direct contact. Clothing and tools can remain contaminated for years. Wash contaminated surfaces with cold water.

Insects



- Avoid wearing sweet-smelling perfumes, hairsprays, and deodorants. Avoid wearing brightly colored clothing or clothes with flower patterns.
- Avoid eating in areas where there are bees because they are attracted to food odors.

Being aware of naturally occurring hazards and knowing how to deal with them is a strong step in defense against the harm they can inflict. ☹

A Closer Look at School Security

Statistics prove that school is one of the safest places for a child to be. Nevertheless, security hazards do confront students and staff, and it is the school district's responsibility to provide the safest environment possible. Modern threats to school security include domestic and workplace violence, drug dealers, gangs and sexual predators, to name of few.

School districts generally take school site security seriously by developing and implementing site-based security programs. Unfortunately, school security sometimes suffers because these programs were either never fully implemented or they have been allowed to erode.

Every district and school site should regularly scrutinize their security programs and make adjustments or enhancements as needed. The following are typical areas where some schools may have let their guard down.

Visitor Policy

Most schools have a visitor policy requiring visitors to check in at the office before entering school property. Usually, there is a sign-in log and some sort of badge system. While these steps are critical, they are only the first steps. Other actions, outlined below, that are sometimes overlooked can result in a more comprehensive and effective campus visitor program.

Signage

The design of some schools makes it difficult for persons unfamiliar with the property to intuitively find the office. Good signage or other types of markings can prevent visitors from wandering or getting lost and being challenged by school personnel as to why they are on the premises.

To further eliminate confusion, signs clearly stating the school's visitor policy should also be prominently displayed around campus.

Designate a separate visitor's parking area and mark it with appropriate signage.

Badges

Many schools use a simple paper visitor's

badge that is discarded when the visitor leaves the premises. Although better than no system at all, most security experts recommend a system that requires both entry and exit sign-in using badges with numbers that can be recorded next to the visitor's name.

Contact Information

Make sure student contact information is up to date. No child should ever be allowed to leave the premises with someone who has not been authorized by the parent or guardian. Domestic and custody situations change, so regularly checking for accuracy is critical. Staff should be trained to challenge visitors not displaying the proper credentials and should not assume that the person has a legitimate reason to be on campus. If personnel are uncomfortable confronting the visitor, or if the visitor's response is unsatisfactory, staff can contact security personnel.

Site Hardening

Site hardening is the process of designing and equipping buildings, athletic fields, parking lots and other school venues to minimize opportunities for criminal activity or violence.

Fencing

Ideally, every school campus should be fenced. Access to school grounds should be controlled through one or two gates that are easily observable. Make sure fencing is in good shape and there are no gaps or holes that could afford access. Also, make sure that all gates are locked at night and when the school is unoccupied. Regularly remove or cut back vegetation around the perimeter of the campus to help reduce hiding places and blind spots

Key Control

Keys should be issued only to persons with a legitimate need for them. Records of key holders should be updated regularly. If a key cannot be accounted for, those lock(s) should be recon-

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Summer is here! No better time to start preparing for the new school year, no better time to think of setting up classrooms and organizing supplies. It is even more important to remember **Safety First!**

Unfortunately, the week before school starts and the first week of school is when a large number of accidents are reported. The majority of those injuries are due to standing on things that are not meant to stand on; such as chairs with wheels, window sills, students' desks, ledges, cabinetry, etc. Others are moving heavy furniture from classroom to classroom. Book bag straps under the desks are a large hazard for teachers.

THINK SAFETY FIRST! You should make sure

all employees have permission to be in the school (to set up classrooms) during summer time hours, while help is available to assist them if needed.

Don't forget to stock up on QualCare and Jordan Reses prescription cards for each of your schools.

Have an enjoyable summer! Any questions, feel free to contact Nancy Spector at extension 3008 or Connie Rogers at extension 3015. ☺

*By Nancy Spector
NJSBAIG Claim Supervisor*

A Closer Look at School Security (Continued from page 2)

figured and new keys distributed. If a person leaves the employment of the school, they should surrender all keys immediately.

Doors

Exterior doors should never be propped open for ventilation or to help with traffic flow. Access to the school should be controlled through a limited number of observable doors. Exit doors should be designed to be opened from the inside only and should be self-closing. Never chain exit doors shut.

Classroom doors should always be locked when the room is not in use. Locker and weight rooms and janitorial closets should also be kept locked. Regular checks should be made to ensure that staff members are following procedures.

If a non-school function is being held at the school, make sure the areas not being used are secured from unauthorized visitors.

Night Lighting

When school is not in session, unauthorized persons on campus must be easily detectable. Good night lighting can both deter intruders and help police and neighbors recognize their presence. Make sure night lighting is operable and adequate for regular observation.

Some schools use a "dark campus" program in lieu of night lighting. This program is most effective when schools are surrounded by homes and businesses. The schools are kept completely dark at night, and neighbors are informed of the fact. If any light is seen in the school at night, it is reason for concern. Local police should be consulted before initiating a dark campus program.

Keeping schools secure is an ongoing process. Do not fall into the "it can't happen here" mentality, because recent history shows, tragically, that it can. By following a few guidelines and procedures, schools can be safer places for student to learn and teachers to teach. ☺

**Willis North America
May 2008 Risk Control Bulletin**

Employment Practices (Train the Trainer)

August 2008

Who should attend?

School Administrators and EEOC Officers

Class Description:

School districts face many kinds of personal injury claims including Sexual harassment, Discrimination, Affirmative Action, Retaliation, etc. This class will discuss the laws and provide training materials to assist administrators in educating their staffs to prevent these claims.

Dates and Locations

September 26, 2008

NJ Department of Education - Gloucester County Office
1492 Tanyard Road
Sewell, NJ (856) 468-6500

OR

October 10, 2008

NJ Department of Education- Burlington County Office
2 Academy Drive
Westampton NJ (609) 265- 5060

***Please call Sue Williams at 609-386-6060 extension 3005 or
swilliams@njsbaig.org to register and confirm your registration.***

The cost is \$20.00 per person. *Class times are 9:00 a.m. to noon.*

NJSBAIG, 450 Veterans Drive, Burlington, NJ 08016