

Safety for schools

Introduction

Talking about safety—at faculty meetings and other employee gatherings—helps keep the topic top-of-mind and demonstrates your commitment to a safe and healthy environment for students and staff.

What do you talk about?

These guides cover topics for 12 short safety trainings—one each month. Designed specifically for teachers, many of these topics also may apply to custodians, kitchen staff, and other school employees. Each training takes around eight minutes. As the discussion

leader, feel free to vary the content to suit your audience and facility. Also, consider discussing a recent injury (no names, please) and share ideas for how to prevent such injuries from happening again.

Ask for feedback.

At the end of each discussion, ask employees about their safety concerns and suggestions. Follow up by the next safety meeting. Communicating openly and often about safety issues helps you address potential hazards before an injury occurs.

Setting up the classroom

Objective

Lead a discussion with teachers about starting the school year safely.

Background: Injuries often happen at the beginning of the school year, when teachers are setting up their classrooms. (We'll cover end-of-year issues in a separate training.)

Consider asking: Do you know someone who experienced muscle soreness or an injury while setting up their classroom?

Ask: What are some activities during classroom set-up that increase injury risk?

- Lifting and moving boxes to and from high shelves
- Carrying and moving materials from vehicles to classrooms
- Using ladders to hang decorations
- Other risks?

Ask: What can we do to decrease injury risk?

- Use equipment to make the task easier
 - What is available: carts, hand trucks, step stools, ladders, etc.
 - Where is it located?
 - Is training required?
- Get help, especially with heavy or awkward items. Work in teams when possible.
- Don't overload boxes. Keep them at a manageable weight.
- Avoid storing heavy or awkward items on high shelves.
- Avoid rushing. Focus on the task at hand.

- When lifting, use good body mechanics
 - Test the load.
 - Keep the load close to your body.
 - Flex your knees.
 - Maintain the curve in your lower back (push your tailbone back and look forward).
 - Avoid twisting.
- Practice ladder safety.
 - Participate in ladder safety training. This Oregon OSHA publication has detailed information, visit: osha.oregon.gov/OSHAPubs/3083.pdf
 - Use the right ladder or step stool for the job (no chairs, desks, or boxes).
 - Inspect the ladder before using to ensure it is in good repair.
 - Move the ladder instead of reaching to the side.

Ask: Any safety concerns or suggestions?

Using step stools

Objective

Talk about how using step stools can prevent injuries, and share how they're currently used at your school.

Start with this scenario: Show the photograph on the back of this page to employees sitting near the front of the meeting. Ask for a volunteer to describe the photograph to the group and offer an explanation for why the trash can is upside down. (It had been used as a make-shift step stool.)



Ask: Why would someone use this as a step stool? **Note:** A step stool is not readily available. Talk about the importance of each classroom having its own step ladder.

Share: Slips, trips, and falls result in many school district injuries. Many falls involve unsafe behaviors, such as using a chair or a trash can as a step stool.

Ask: How many of you have retrieved an item from a high shelf this past week? Please raise your hand. Please keep your hands up if you used a step stool. Thank those who still have their hands up.

Details to consider sharing:

- Using a step stool is much safer than using a chair, trash can, or box, as these items can collapse or be unstable.
- Using a step stool to get an item from a top shelf lets you get closer to the load, reducing shoulder stress.
- Encourage employees to take the time to get the proper equipment to do the job safely.
- Encourage employees to use carts or other equipment and to ask for help if they are moving heavy or awkward items to high locations.
- Encourage employees to avoid placing heavy or awkward items in high locations when possible.

Ask:

- Is there anyone who does not know where to find a step stool?
- Are there areas where we need additional step stools or ladders?
- Are step stools and ladders readily available in the areas where they will be needed?

List: Actions to take as a result of input and discussion.

Ask: Any safety concerns or suggestions?



Why is this trash can upside down?

Preventing slips, trips, and falls

Objective

Lead a discussion about best practices for preventing slips, trips, and falls in the classroom.

Background: Slips, trips, and falls are a leading cause of classroom injuries. Cords running across the floor, boxes on the floor, dropped papers, and even paperclips can be slip or trip hazards, especially when you are distracted or your view is obstructed.

Consider asking: Has anyone here ever slipped, tripped, or fallen in the classroom? Will you share your experience to prevent it happening to others?

Ask: What are the best practices for preventing slips, trips, and falls?

- Practice good housekeeping.
 - Pick up fallen items right away.
 - Recognize teachers for excellent housekeeping.



- Secure cords. Think about:
 - Taping the cord to the floor
 - Securing the cord with a Velcro strip
 - Using plastic or rubber cord covers



- Gather excess cords with a twist tie or Velcro strip so they don't spill into walking areas.
- Use a power strip with a longer cord to position cords out of walkways.
- Move furniture so cords are closer to plug-ins.
- Wear shoes with good traction and closed heel and toe.
- Look where you are going, and go where you are looking.
- Walk, don't run.
- Get enough sleep. Being well rested improves alertness.

Ask: Any safety concerns or suggestions?

Walking safely on snow, ice, and wet surfaces

Objective

Discuss ideas for preventing slips and falls during winter weather and in wet conditions.

Background: Slips and falls are more common in the winter, not just because of snow and ice, but because of rain. Frequent transitions from wet surfaces to ice can result in a significant number of injuries. Moss and wet leaves also are slipping hazards.

Ask: How can you reduce the risk of slips, trips, and falls on ice, snow, and wet surfaces?

Wear appropriate footwear with good traction.

- Avoid areas with snow or ice, when possible.
- Avoid wet tile floors, such as after a floor has been mopped or near entrances.
- Place slip-resistant and absorbent mats near entrances.
- Keep your main walkways clear of ice, snow, and moss.

- Slow down; hurrying increases your risk of slipping.
- Avoid carrying items that prevent you from seeing where you are going.
- Consider using shoe chains during snowy or icy conditions.
- Walk slowly, shorten your stride, and point your toes to the sides (like a penguin). (Show the image on opposite page). Adjust your ankle so your entire foot touches the ground at the same time (instead of rolling from heel to toe).
- Maintain good lighting, especially on walkways and stairs. Notify school management or the custodian about insufficient lighting.
- Clean up spills promptly and use wet floor signs to alert others.
- When using sand for traction in icy areas, clean up immediately after ice has melted.

Standard
stride



Safer-shorter
stride when
hazards are
present



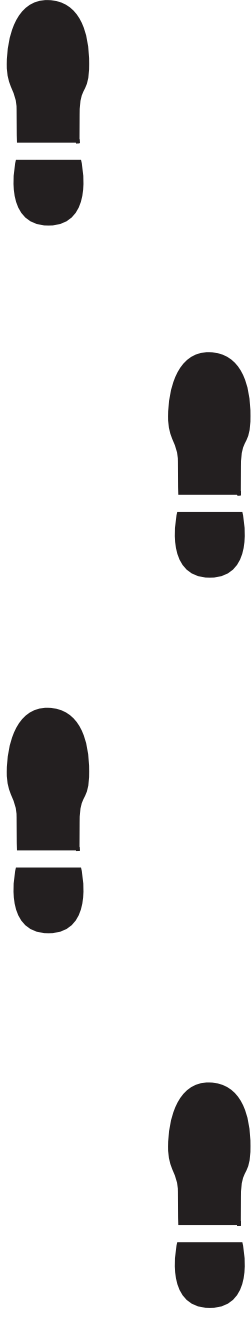
Safest stride
when walking
on slippery
surfaces



Plan ahead. If snow or ice is in the forecast, make sure you have adequate supplies on hand.

Ask: Any safety concerns or suggestions?

Standard stride



Safer-shorter stride when hazards are present



Safest stride when walking on slippery surfaces



Getting active

Objective

Encourage staff to improve their health and well-being through physical activity, and identify ways to be active during the work day.

Share: This meeting's short safety item is a video related to well-being.

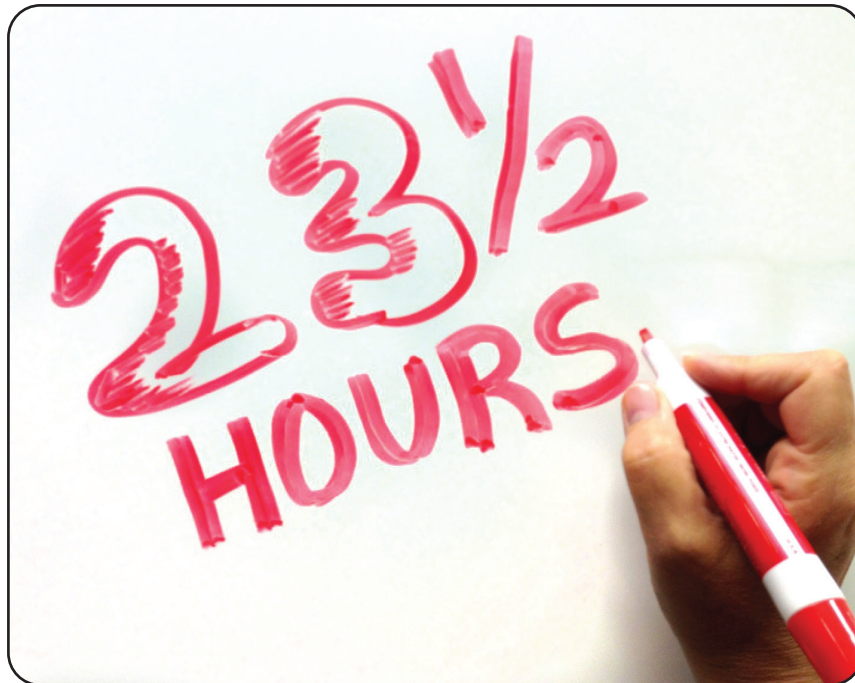
Share the video "23 ½ hours" available from YouTube (bit.ly/3ZBswKL).

Ask: What are your thoughts after watching the video? What does this video mean for you?

What supports physical activity either at work or at home? What makes physical activity harder? What can the school district do to help you build more physical activity into your day?

List: Actions to take as a result of staff input and discussion.

Ask: Any safety concerns or suggestions?



Checking footwear

Objective

Discuss strategies for inspecting footwear.

Share: Slips occur when there is too little traction between the footwear and the walking surface. Wearing shoes that are in good condition with a high-traction sole can help prevent slips, trips, and falls.

A rule of thumb: Replace your shoes when an area on the sole the size of two pennies laid flat has been worn smooth (see photo examples).

In addition to the two-penny rule, replace footwear when:

- Cracks go all the way through the sole.
- Chunks or pieces of the sole are missing.
- Separating from the upper portion.
- Holes appear in fabric or leather upper portion.

Ask: Take a look at your shoes. What kind of condition are they in? Will your current shoes reduce or increase your risk of a slip, either at home or at work? Why?

Consider sharing: This is a great opportunity to clarify footwear expectations.

Ask: Any safety concerns or suggestions?



Driving safely

Objective

List five safe driving tips.

Share: Motor vehicle accidents are the leading cause of workplace fatalities and are life-altering for everyone involved.

Ask: What can drivers do to arrive at their destination safely?

- Stay focused. Avoid distractions.
 - Pull over when talking or texting on a cell phone. Studies have repeatedly shown that talking on a hands-free device decreases the driver's ability to focus and increases the risk of a crash.
 - Don't eat while driving.
 - Avoid personal grooming while driving, such as applying make-up.
- Get enough rest. Pull over if you are tired. (Share the handout on the next page.)
- Wear a seat belt.
- Keep your distance. Four to five seconds of distance between vehicles allows you enough reaction time in the event of a road hazard.

- Check mirrors regularly. Position them properly so you can see the roadway.
- Drive sober.
- Maintain your vehicle.
- Keep windows clean.
- Remain calm. Avoid aggressive driving or road rage. Don't retaliate for another driver's errors, such as cutting you off.
- Provide yourself with plenty of time to reach your destination.
- Take a defensive driving class.
- Slow down after dark, when it is harder to see potential hazards.
- To avoid headlight glare, look at the white line marking the outside edge of the traffic lane instead of oncoming traffic, to avoid headlight glare.

Consider asking: What's one thing you can do to improve your driving? Share a personal example.

Ask: Any safety concerns or suggestions?

**Don't drive
drowsy**

Crash
in
your **bed,**
not on
the **road.**





Don't drive drowsy

Crash
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Know the
warning signs

Warning signs

You can fall asleep while driving and not know it.

- Trouble focusing or keeping your eyes open
- Yawning or rubbing your eyes repeatedly
- Difficulty keeping your mind on your driving
- Drifting from your lane, tailgating, and missing signs or exits
- Inability to clearly remember the last few miles driven
- Feeling restless, irritable, or aggressive
- Turning up the radio or rolling down the window
- Slow reaction time
- Poor judgment
- Difficulty processing information
- Poor short-term memory
- Microsleeps, defined as brief sleep episodes of two or three seconds

See **drowsydriving.org**
for more information.

Source: National Sleep Foundation

sailf
Work. Life. Oregon.

G1040 | 10.22



Fatigue and driving: do and don't

Fatigue and driving

Do:

- Get a good night's sleep before a long drive
- Get off the road if you notice any of the warning signs of fatigue
- Find a safe place to take a 15- to 20-minute nap
- Drive with a friend. A passenger who remains awake can help watch for signs of fatigue in the driver and can take a turn driving if necessary.

Don't:

- Drive if you are tired or on medication that may cause drowsiness
- Rely on the radio, an open window, or other tricks to keep you awake
- Drive at times when you would normally be sleeping
- Drink even a small amount of alcohol, especially if you are sleepy

See **drowsydriving.org**

for more information. *Source:*

National Sleep Foundation

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Work. Life. Oregon.

G1040 | 10.22

Improving sleep

Objective

List three ideas for improving sleep.

Share: Insufficient sleep has been linked to motor vehicle crashes, industrial disasters, medical errors, and obesity.

The National Sleep Foundation suggests elementary school children need from 10 to 11 hours of sleep, teens need 8½ to 9 hours, and adults need 7 to 9 hours.

Ask: Are you getting enough sleep?

Ask: What are some tips for getting a good night's sleep? What works for you?

- Maintain the same sleep and wake patterns on days off and work days.
- Avoid stimulants, such as caffeine and nicotine, in the afternoon and evening.
- Avoid the following within two hours of bedtime:
 - Screens (computer, cell phone)

- Exercise
- Large meals
- Alcohol
- Wind down before going to bed.
- Get at least 30 minutes of exposure to natural daylight.
- Maintain a cool (65 to 69 degree), dark, and distraction-free sleep environment.
- Avoid daytime naps longer than 30 minutes.
- Exercise regularly, completing your workout at least two hours before bedtime.

Ask: What can the school district do to support adequate sleep?

- Offer scheduling flexibility when possible.
- Provide an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) to address temporary stressors.
- Create a dark and quiet room for quick rest breaks.

Ask: Any safety concerns or suggestions?

For more information on sleep-related issues, visit: saif.com/sleep.

Being awake for more than

20 hours is equal to having a

blood-alcohol concentration of .08

—the legal limit for intoxication in Oregon.

—National Sleep Foundation

Using PPE at home

Objective

Discuss the importance of using appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) at home.

Background: Most school districts require staff to wear personal protective equipment (PPE) when performing specific tasks, such as eye protection when operating a metal shop lathe or hearing protection when operating a grass mower.

However, people often don't wear PPE when doing similar tasks at home.

Ask: What are some tasks people perform at home that would be safer with PPE?

- **Using string trimmers:** Wear safety glasses, a face shield, ear protection (for a gas-powered model), long-sleeve shirt, and pants.
- **Using table saws or chop saws:** Wear safety glasses and hearing protection.
- **Using a chain saw:** Wear chaps, safety glasses, hearing protection, hard hat, and boots.
- **Using chemical cleaners:** Wear protective gloves and safety glasses or goggles (depending on the splash hazard and hazards associated with the chemical).

- **Doing general yard work such as dragging brush:** Wear leather gloves, long pants, and closed-toe shoes.
- **Using herbicides:** Follow the manufacturer's recommendation for the chemical. This often will include long-sleeve shirt and pants, appropriate gloves, and eye protection.
- **Handling wooden crates or materials for wood shop:** Wear leather gloves.
- **Weeding while kneeling on concrete or on hard, rocky packed ground:** Use a foam pad or wear knee pads.
- **Cleaning up blood spills and other body fluids:** Wear nitrile (or similar) exam gloves and, depending on task, eyewear, and an impermeable apron.

Ask: Do you have PPE at home for these tasks? Is it in good repair?

Ask: Any safety concerns or suggestions?



Preventing colds and flu

Objective

Know the basics for preventing infectious diseases, such as colds or flu.

Background: Children are efficient germ carriers. A few simple changes may help prevent the spread of disease in the classroom—and to co-workers and family.

Ask: What's the difference between a cold and the flu?

Share: Cold viruses are carried from our noses and mouths in tiny moisture droplets that typically fall out of the air onto surfaces within about a 3-foot radius. These viruses can live for several hours, plenty of time to be picked up and spread. We commonly pick up the virus on our hands and then unconsciously touch our nose, mouth, or eyes, where it has a good chance of making us ill. There's no vaccine for the common cold, and antibiotics are ineffective. Fortunately, colds usually pass in about a week.

Seasonal influenza, or the flu, is a contagious respiratory illness caused by viruses that infect the nose, throat, and lungs. It can cause mild to severe illness, and even lead to death. It is spread the same way as a cold, but the virus changes every year and has a specific season. The flu season typically starts in the fall, around late September, peaks in January and February, and is over by the end of March or a little later. Only a lab test can verify if an illness is the flu.

Ask: What's our best protection against the flu?

Share: Vaccination in September is the best protection, but we can get the vaccine anytime during flu season. It takes a couple of weeks to develop immunity. This is one reason people sometimes mistakenly believe that the vaccine "causes" the flu.

Getting vaccinated isn't enough. Most healthy adults may infect others from one day before symptoms develop up to seven days after becoming sick. Young children and people with weakened immune systems may be infectious even longer.

Ask: What else can we do?



Note

Download these posters to help prevent the spread of colds and flu. (Or order through your assigned safety consultant.)

Be a workplace flu fighter
bit.ly/3x0HpNF

Hans Washer
bit.ly/3Y4lGfo

Maxine Vaccine
bit.ly/3Zl8sfc

Share: Fortunately, the measures we take to protect ourselves from the flu are also effective against many other communicable diseases, including the common cold:

1. Avoid close contact.

A 3-foot distance is ideal, but not always practical. Since exhaled droplets are the culprits, turning your head away from exhaled air can help.

2. Stay home when you're sick.

If you have flu-like symptoms, stay home for 24 hours after fever (100° F) has passed without medication.

3. Cough or sneeze into your elbow.

If you use a tissue, dispose of it promptly and wash your hands.

4. Wash your hands and wrists often.

Use soap and running water, and wash long enough to sing Happy Birthday twice. If soap and water aren't available, use an alcohol-based hand rub with at least 60 percent alcohol. Leave it on until dry to kill the germs.

5. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth.

6. Practice other good health habits.

Clean frequently touched surfaces, especially when someone is ill. To keep your immune system working well, get plenty of sleep, be physically active, manage your stress, drink plenty of fluids, and eat nutritious food.

Ask: Any safety concerns or suggestions?



Hans Washer
Flu Fighter

Preventing student-related injuries

Objective

Discuss strategies for preventing injuries while addressing disruptive behavior; discuss changes to the environment that may reduce injuries.

Background: Behavior-related incidents have increased in recent years, and many school districts are looking for ways to prevent these injuries. This guide is meant to start a discussion and provide suggestions. However, districts should review their own efforts to determine if there are other measures, including intensive behavioral intervention training, that may benefit employees.

Ask: Has anyone experienced disruptive or aggressive behavior in the classroom? What did you do to address it?

Share: Here are some ideas for preventing injuries related to clothing and jewelry.

- Wear loose or baggy clothing that you can easily slip out of if it is grabbed or pulled. Wear long sleeves and long pants whenever possible to protect from bites or scratches. Bite guards, shin guards, or padded jackets can be worn for added protection.
- Wear safety glasses when working with students known to spit or throw objects.
- Wear ear plugs or ear muffs when supporting students who scream.
- Avoid necklaces and ties, or tuck them into clothing. If wearing a tie, consider a clip-on so it will break free if pulled. Use clip-on identification tags or break-away lanyards.

- Avoid wearing rings, especially with protruding stones. Turn stones inward to avoid scratching or getting caught. Dangling or hoop earrings should not be worn. Consider not wearing jewelry or clothing that can be easily pulled or caught.
- Tie back long hair, but be aware that a pony tail may be grabbed. Wearing a knit hat is another strategy for preventing hair pulling.
- Wear sturdy, stable closed-toe shoes with non-slip soles.

Ask: How can we make the environment safer around disruptive students?

Maintain good housekeeping standards. Pick up any items immediately that have been dropped or left on the floor. Keep school supplies organized and safely store them out of reach. Avoid clutter.

Limit student access to items that can be thrown. Consider substituting with safer learning tools.

Use safe tools and equipment and ensure that it is in good repair.

Ask: Any safety concerns or suggestions?

Closing the classroom

Objective

Lead a discussion about how to finish the school year safely.

Background: Similar to the start of the school year, injuries often increase at the end of the year when staff move out materials and take down decorations.

Consider asking: Do you know someone who experienced muscle soreness or an injury while cleaning up at the end of the year?

Ask: What tasks may increase our risk of injury during end-of-year clean-up?

- Lifting and moving boxes to and from high shelves
- Carrying and moving materials from classrooms to vehicles
- Using ladders to take down decorations
- Other risks?

Ask: What can we do to decrease injury risk?

- Use equipment to make the task easier.
 - What is available: carts, hand trucks, step stools, ladders, etc.
 - Where is it located?
 - Is training required?
- Get help, especially with heavy or awkward items. Work in teams when possible.
- Don't overload boxes. Keep them at a manageable weight.
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 - Use the right ladder or step stool for the job (no chairs, desks, or boxes).
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Ask: Any safety concerns or suggestions?