



# KICKING OFF THE SCHOOL YEAR SAFELY!

It is that time again! The start of a new school year is just around the corner. The weeks leading up to the first day are often very busy as schools and families prepare for the year ahead. The activities at schools are countless – teachers are setting up their classroom, coaches and club leaders are adding a personal touch to bulletin boards, the nutrition team is stocking the kitchen, the facilities department is finishing summer projects, transportation is getting the buses ready to go, there are team-building activities across departments, and so much more. No matter the activity, it is important that we keep safety at the forefront as we kick off a new school year!

- It is not uncommon for teachers or other employees to bring furniture or fixtures from home to use in their classrooms. Your organization should establish policies and procedures for this to help minimize the associated risk
  - Determine if your organization will permit this activity and under what boundaries. Consider what are permitted items vs. non-permitted for an employee to bring in to the school. For example, while a bookshelf may be okay, you would not want a maintenance employee bringing an unguarded saw into the shop.
  - For furniture or fixtures, consider:
    - How can you ensure the item can be safely used in the classroom?
    - How will this be safely hung or installed?
    - Does it need to be secured?
    - How will the item be brought in?
    - Who will oversee this process?
  - This is especially common at the beginning of the year so it is best to pre-plan! A few examples of the ways this might be managed:
    - Request and approval forms.
    - Have facilities members on-site to help set up, secure, or check the items during pre-planning.
    - Before school begins, have the facilities teams check classrooms to confirm no hazards are created.
- Another common activity during pre-planning is decorating or setting up the classrooms, hallways, bulletin boards, etc. This can be a source of trip and fall injuries.
  - Ensure employees have the right tools readily available to work safely, such as step stools. Communicate with employees as to where these can be located.



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- Before pre-planning begins, have the maintenance team inspect all step stools to ensure they are in adequate condition. Select and provide sturdy step stools that have a good platform and are rated for 250 pounds or more. If you have a limited supply, assign days or times in which these will be available to the schools or grade level.
  - Remind employees that standing on chairs, tables, or desks is NOT safe and not permitted.
  - Educate employees on the safe way to use stepladders, step stools, or other tools they may not often use. Remind employees to wear proper footwear as well (i.e. no flip-flops or heels).
  - Remember, things we do not do often we tend to not do well. Employees who might not use stools, ladders, or tools often, might not be the best suited for the task. Instead, have the facilities or maintenance teams present and available to help. For example, consider assigning specific days and times during pre-planning that a maintenance employee will be available to each grade level to help. Communicate this to teachers ahead of time so they are aware.
  - Ask that everyone pitch in to help with housekeeping and keep walkways clear.
  - Wear good footwear suitable to the task at hand.
- As you plan team-building activities, please remember to consider safety!
    - A relay race or dizzy bat may sound like a lot of fun but it can also lead to a workplace accident. Instead, consider activities that are less physically involved.
    - Require team-building activities to be approved by the safety committee or administration as this allows the second set of eyes to evaluate for any safety concerns.
  - Summertime is often the opportune time to carry out maintenance projects, as it is easier to complete while the school is not occupied. These projects sometimes carry over into pre-planning, as the students are still not present. If any maintenance or facilities projects are taking place during pre-planning, ensure others present in the building are safely distanced from any hazards.



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