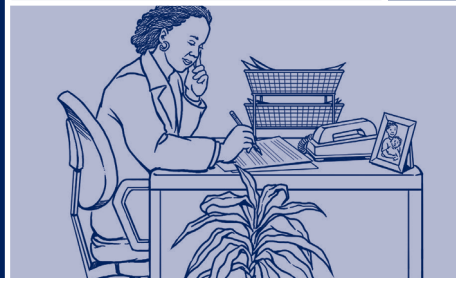


SAFELY AT THE CENTER OF IT ALL:

A Health and Safety Tip Sheet for School Administrative and Office Staff



School and district administrative and office staff juggle many tasks to keep schools running. Whether you produce yearly reports, manage enrollment, or help a child who is not feeling well, you play a vital role. By taking care of your own health and safety at work, you avoid injuries that could mean time away from work.

A little planning will go a long way toward making your work environment safer. These three steps will help you get started:

1. Identify job hazards
2. Work towards solutions
3. Follow up and share your successes

Step 1. Identify job hazards

The chart on the following pages lists many of the common hazards that affect administrative and office staff. Use this chart to identify the hazards relevant to your work. Talk to your co-workers to find out if they have similar concerns. Report any hazards to your supervisor.

Step 2. Work towards solutions

The chart also offers tips for reducing hazards. Develop a plan to implement the changes that are needed. Some suggestions:

- Assess what changes you can make on your own, and what you need your employer or supervisor to do.
- When possible, work together with your school's site safety coordinator, union, and co-workers.
- Share your ideas with your supervisor.
- Workplace hazards can be reduced or eliminated by: (1) removing the hazard (preferable); (2) instituting policies and procedures that reduce the hazard; and/or (3) using personal protective equipment.
- Find out if there are laws that support the change you need.

* Did you know?

- School employees as a whole have a higher rate of work-related injuries and illnesses than do other California workers.
- School administrators and office staff face extra challenges such as working with older equipment and limited funds.
- The most common office accident in schools is falling.



Common Job Hazards and Safety Tips for School Administrative and Office Staff

Slip and Fall Hazards

The most common accidents in schools are slips, trips, and falls. These injuries can be caused by slippery or uneven walking surfaces, cluttered walkways or open file drawers.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify the cause of the slippery floor and address the problem to eliminate the hazard. • Keep all walkways clear of clutter. • Make sure shelves and storage racks are stable and secured. • Wear shoes with non-skid soles. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be aware of caution signs for maintenance and construction projects. • If you need to reach high places, never stand on a chair or desk. Use a ladder or footstool, or ask a custodian for help. |
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Ergonomic Hazards

These are caused by poor job design that results in sprains, strains, and other wear and tear on the body. Ergonomic hazards include: using a computer, sitting for most of the day, or bending to reach for objects.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When you work on a computer: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Position the chair and desk so that your knees and forearms are at 90 degree angles, with wrists straight and feet flat on the floor or on a footrest. - The top of your screen should be at or just below eye level, and 16-22 inches away. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Keep materials you need close by. - Take a brief stretch break each hour. • Avoid moving supplies or equipment without assistance. • Obtain the SASH ergonomics fact sheet for additional practical tips. |
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Infectious Disease

You could be exposed to many different viruses and bacteria, such as the common cold, flu, HIV, and Hepatitis B. Remember that some diseases common in children are more dangerous to adults.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wash your hands frequently. • Stay home if you're sick! • If you provide first aid to students, you may need a Hepatitis B vaccine and bloodborne pathogens training. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you may come into contact with blood or other bodily fluids: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - wear disposable gloves; - wash your hands with soap and water; and - disinfect any equipment or work areas that are affected. |
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Poor Indoor Air Quality

Poor air quality can contribute to respiratory problems and voice disorders. A lack of fresh air, poor ventilation, molds, and bacteria can all reduce air quality in schools. Portables and relocatable buildings made with pressed wood may release formaldehyde.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open doors and windows to get fresh air. • Verify that the heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) system is working. The HVAC system should be inspected annually. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report water leaks or signs of dampness right away.
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Chemicals

Many types of chemicals are used in schools, such as cleaning products, pesticides, and, in older buildings, asbestos in flooring or ceiling tiles.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Find out what types of chemicals are present in the school. • If you use any cleaning supplies, follow safety precautions on the label. • Ask your supervisor to provide less toxic chemicals. • Ventilate the area as well as possible. • Ask your supervisor for chemicals training. Be familiar with the emergency plan in case of a chemical accident. • Make sure all chemicals are labeled and that you have a Safety Data Sheet (SDS)* for each product. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To reduce the need for pesticides, make sure offices are cleaned well after eating or drinking, and have any cracks and crevices repaired. • Call maintenance if there is a possibility of lead or asbestos exposure. Lead can be found on painted surfaces and can be disturbed during repairs. Asbestos could be found in spray-on insulation, ceiling tiles, flooring or pipe insulation and is only a hazard if it is disturbed.
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***What is an SDS?** An SDS is a Safety Data Sheet prepared by the manufacturer of a chemical or product. It provides detailed information about a chemical, such as how to protect yourself (including the use of gloves, respirators, or other protective gear), how to store the chemical, and what to do in an emergency. Your supervisor must provide the SDS on request.



Stress

Multiple demands, budget cuts, older equipment, new technology, and upset parents can all cause stress. Ignoring stress can result in health symptoms and can escalate to hypertension or heart disease.

- Make a list of what is causing stress at work and think about ways to reduce these problems. Start by selecting one or two issues to work on so you don't feel overwhelmed.
- Talk to co-workers and friends about your issues.
- Find some time to relax each day. Having 20 minutes or so of quiet time helps relieve stress.

- Try to get regular exercise.
- Eat a well-balanced, healthy diet.



Violence and Aggressive Student Behavior

About three-quarters of all public schools experience one or more violent incidents of crime every year; almost half report thefts.

- Report to maintenance staff any locks and alarms that are not working.
- Set up a communication system if you're working alone at night or when school is out.
- Check your reporting process for violent incidents and threats.

- Make sure the school requires parents and visitors to sign in at the main office.
- Put your personal belongings in a secure place.
- Advocate for workplace violence training for all school staff.
- Obtain the SASH emergencies fact sheet for additional practical tips.



Step 3. Follow up and share your successes

Once you've identified the hazards and solutions, follow up to make sure the changes are implemented. Contact your district's or school's safety coordinator for help or suggestions. Share your successes with your co-workers and your supervisor.

School Site Safety Coordinator

The person in charge of health and safety at your school is:

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

District Resource

The person in charge of health and safety at your district is:

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Reporting Injuries and Illnesses

It is important to report work-related injuries and illnesses. You cannot be discriminated against or punished for doing so. If you have a work-related injury or illness, contact:

Name: _____

Phone: _____

To learn more....

Go to the SASH website at www.dir.ca.gov/CHSWC/SASH and click on Hazards by Occupation. Or call 510-642-5507.

* Safety Pays

Although resources are limited in school districts, some solutions do not require extra money.

Preventing injuries can actually SAVE lives and SAVE money by:

- reducing workers' compensation claims;
- avoiding loss in productivity when injuries occur; and
- improving employee morale!