

Classroom Safety and Security Controls

Classroom Life Safety and Crisis Prevention Controls

- **Ensure your crisis plan is readily available and that you have a clear understanding of how to enact the crisis plan.** Crisis plans should be located in the same place in every classroom (posted at eye level next to the exit door). During an actual emergency, time is of the essence; don't waste time looking for your crisis plan.
- **In each and every classroom, identify a large object (desk, table, filing cabinet, etc.) that can be placed against the exit door during a lockdown situation.** Barricading the door provides another level of protection to prevent an intruder from entering the classroom.
- **Know how to immediately evacuate your area of responsibility in case of a fire, tornado, bomb threat or other emergency.** A teacher may know how to evacuate his/her classroom. But do you know how to safely exit the school if you are in another classroom? In the cafeteria or the gymnasium? Do all teaching aides, substitute teachers, and volunteers know how to evacuate students from the school building?
- **Ensure that a communication means (cell phone, classroom phone, walkie-talkie) is available to contact the main office or emergency services.**
Your teachers should always carry their cell phones whether they are in the classroom, in the gymnasium, outside of the school on the playground, or away on a field trip. Instant emergency communication should be a number one priority.
- **Never cover your doors or windows with paper or decorations.**
Maintaining visual communication is key during a crisis or emergency. Covering doors and windows with decorations also presents a significant life safety hazard if the fire were to occur around an exit door or window.
- **Never cover more than 20% of your classroom walls with paper or combustible materials due to the significant fire concern.**
Fifty percent of the wall space can be covered with combustible materials if the room is protected with fire sprinklers. Excessive amounts of paper on the walls (decorations, art work, etc.) can quickly spread a fire if it were to occur in your classroom.
- **Always close and secure your room doors when the classroom is occupied and not occupied.**
Keep your classroom door closed and secured when class is in session and especially when the room is unoccupied. Bad things cannot occur in your classroom if it always locked when you aren't present.

About the Author:



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Ted Hayes specializes in property and casualty insurance, consulting with school districts and municipalities throughout Wisconsin to develop safety programs and risk management programs

- **Don't bring electrical appliances, portable space heaters, fans, microwaves, etc. in to the classroom without the permission of administration.** Appliances brought from home present a serious fire, burn, and electrocution exposure – especially in elementary schools. History shows that many classroom fires originated from faulty home appliances (wiring concerns) or appliances that were knocked over in the classroom.
- **Be in the hallways between classes to supervise students.** Bad things tend to occur among students when little or no supervision is present. Periodically check bathrooms, locker rooms, and any other areas where students congregate. Bullying and harassment tends to occur when there is little or no supervision.

Classroom Accident Prevention Controls

- **Never stand on tables, desks or chairs to hang items from the ceiling or to reach objects on a shelving unit.** Every year, a significant number of teachers are seriously injured when standing on a table, desk, or chair. Take the time to use a proper ladder; better yet, ask your custodian to assist you.
- **Never store materials or objects high on shelving units.** Besides the obvious material handling concern, objects could fall on to students below. An object weighing just a few ounces could cause serious injury if it were to fall and strike someone below.
- **Always contact your school's custodian when heavy objects must be lifted or moved in the classroom.** The custodian may have the proper tool to move the object or they can provide additional assistance when handling heavy objects.
- **Wear proper non-slip footwear to prevent slip and fall accidents.** This is especially important during snow and ice conditions. High heels, flip-flops, and flat soled dress shoes should be discouraged. When the snow and ice season begins, teachers should wear sensible safe footwear in to and out of the school building. They can change in to their other shoes once they are in the classroom. Don't underestimate the importance of proper footwear. Over the years, every school district experiences a number of teacher slip and fall accidents that result in serious injury and increased insurance costs for the school district.
- **Constantly be aware of classroom trip and fall hazards – objects in the walkways, extension cords on the floor, etc...** As the old saying goes, 'we trip on mice not elephants.' Constantly be on the lookout for any object (no matter how small) that presents a trip and fall hazard for school employees and students. Good housekeeping in the classroom and in the hallways should be a number one priority all of the time.
- **Ensure students have received accurate and complete instructions before an activity begins.** No matter the activity, students must receive proper instruction. This is especially important in physical education, science, chemistry and technology education classes. Many classroom injuries to students and staff could be avoided if thorough instructions were provided.
- **Report all incidents, accidents, and near misses immediately to school administration.** Any and all incidents must be reported to your administration. Don't believe that an injury must occur before it is considered an accident. Recognizing and addressing minor incidents and near misses will prevent a more severe accident from occurring.

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