

SELF-INSURED SCHOOLS OF CALIFORNIA

PROPERTY & LIABILITY UPDATE

MAY 7, 2014

FLOOR MAINTENANCE

During school breaks, which occur throughout the year, school districts often perform routine floor maintenance. The procedures and products used to perform this maintenance are sometimes a direct cause of many “slip and fall” accidents. Maintenance staff may not have proper instruction and training in floor care and may fail to follow manufacturers’ directions when cleaning and waxing. Even the best cleaning and waxing products can be hazardous if applied or used improperly. Many of these injuries and claims could be eliminated through the implementation of the following controls:

Training: This should be done at the beginning of the summer cleaning/maintenance season. A program could be presented by the custodial supervisor or by a qualified representative from the vendor who provides the district’s floor wax or other floor treatment materials.

Supervision: Someone in a supervisory position should check periodically to ensure employees are following the instructions they were given.

Anti-slip Waxes: Be sure waxes purchased by the school district are anti-slip. The container label should indicate this by listing a slip resistance rating of .50 or higher. The slip resistance rating is also known as

the static coefficient of friction, sometimes printed as SCOF.

Footwear: Proper footwear for floor-stripping operations is essential. Rubber soled shoes with tread are the minimum standard. There are also floor-stripping safety shoes or over-the-shoe “safety soles” that are effective. The cost for appropriate footwear should be nominal, especially when compared to the costs associated with a lost-time workers’ compensation claim.

Adequate Lighting and Good Housekeeping: These two common sense topics are extremely important but are sometimes overlooked when employees take shortcuts. They should be addressed and reinforced in safety training programs.

Wet-floor Signs: By themselves, these signs certainly are not a solution to preventing slips and falls, but they are a very important piece in notifying others who may enter the area and should be used to supplement the other controls listed above.

Close inspection of the flooring during these procedures may also uncover defects. Once the District has notice of any such defects, it is important that repairs be accomplished in a reasonable time period. Lack of any remedial ac-

tion on the part of the District can potentially lead to liability for the existence of a dangerous condition of public property under the Government Code should an individual later allege that the defect was the cause of their trip, slip or fall.

The collective use of these controls will help reduce injuries due to slips and falls on wet floors. If you have any questions, please contact your SISC Safety Specialist at (661) 636-4604.

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