



WISCONSIN SCHOOL SAFETY COORDINATORS ASSOCIATION WSSCA

AUGUST 2011 NEWSLETTER

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LADDER SAFETY. As safety personnel, and wearing many hats in our organizations, there may be times when we forget to pay attention to the everyday things we and our staff do to complete our work. This year, we had a staff member fall backwards off a ladder. Of course, the main thing was that he was ok. He was off with a severe head injury but thankfully, he has since recovered. Just as we found out that he would be alright, in comes the Department of Commerce to investigate the accident. This visit became a positive learning lesson for me and the district and I would like to share it so other school districts may learn from my experience.

As the inspector came in, he asked four main questions: 1. Was the employee changing a ceiling tile just before he fell? The answer was yes. 2. Does your custodial staff get on ladders to paint? Again, the answer was yes. 3. Did I know that staff using ladders for this type of work is covered under OSHA code 1926.1060(a) (yes, I did) which reads:

1926.1060(a) The employer shall provide a training program for each employee using ladders and stairways, as necessary. The program shall enable each employee to recognize hazards related to ladders and stairways, and shall train each employee in the procedures to be followed to minimize these hazards.

This type of work is also covered under OSHA code 1926.1053(b)(15) which reads:

1926.1053(b)(15) Ladders shall be inspected by a competent person for visible defects on a periodic basis and after occurrences that could affect their safe use.

Question 4 was, do I have these inspections in place and documented in the district? Remember, if it isn't documented the answer is no. The inspector wrote the two violations up against the district and gave me three months to have them corrected. To me the biggest problem was how was I going to set up some type of ladder safety program and train 50+ staff members. I knew that not all of them would ever use a ladder under these circumstances but to me, it was better to be safe than sorry.

Looking at the first violation I searched the web to see what was out there for ladder safety programs. I was concerned about the type of program the district would be paying for and I wanted to be sure that the training was consistent and documented. What I found was a great online program through the American Ladder Institute. The website is:

<http://www.laddersafetytraining.org/Register.aspx>

This program consists of three modules that can be viewed online, which included a test and a certificate for each module. Not only was this a way for me to get the same consistent information to my staff along with documentation, it was also free to all.

Taking care of the second violation was more costly and time consuming, yet in the big picture it was well worth it. Staff in each building had to inspect, number, and document all ladders in their buildings. Any ladder that did not meet safety standards were destroyed, then replaced. We replaced or added about 35 ladders district-wide at a cost of about \$5,000.

The three months goes by and in comes the inspector to see if we made the required corrections. I showed him the online program and the documentation of those that had completed the program, along with the ladder inspection list, and copies of the ladder purchase invoices. We were found to be in compliance of the codes with no further action required.

I still see this as a positive step for the safety of the staff. I felt the inspector was doing his job and found that we were doing something wrong. If we had been in compliance, would it have prevented the original fall? I guess we will never know, but hopefully it will prevent future situations that may arise. So, if your district does not have a program in place you may want to consider starting one, before the inspector asks you the same questions he asked me.

Bob Severson, Chippewa Falls School District, retired

EDITOR'S NOTE: Bob Severson retired on June 30th from the Chippewa Falls School District. Their loss was our gain. Bob has agreed to increase his already significant contribution to the organization by accepting WSSCA President Bill Freeman's offer to be our webmaster and IT guy. This is a significant step for us as we continue to improve WSSCA's operational capacity and enhance our ability to serve our members. Like what you see with WSSCA thus far? Well, with this new member on our team, you ain't seen nothing yet! Welcome aboard Bob!

NEW RULES FOR SOCCER GOALS. Effective July 1, 2011, the Wisconsin Department of Commerce has a new rule regarding anchoring and securing movable soccer goals. Please see the attachment or Commerce Department Rules Chapter 9 for details.

COMING SOON! WSSCA on Facebook and Twitter! We have begun to upgrade our ability to communicate with our members and the social media is the best way to do so. You can find us on facebook now, but our folks are still putting the final touches on our Twitter account, and we should ready to go in time for the new school year. Check us out on the website: www.wssca.org. You'll find a lot of information there that you can use to help you do your job and to make our schools safe.

THOUGHT OF THE DAY: "Investment in education pays the best investment." - Ben Franklin

Wishing you a safe day,

Peter Pochowski
Executive Director and Editor

Education First - Safety Always