

Safety Newsletter



Central Region
School Insurance Group

A quarterly publication for injury and illness prevention

Fall 2025

Anxiety and Stress Management Did you know?

- Just 20 minutes in nature can lower cortisol levels significantly and improve mood and focus
- Practicing gratitude daily has been linked to 23% lower levels of stress hormones and improved heart health.
- Chronic stress increases your risk of heart disease by over 40%!
- Meditation and deep breathing can reduce cortisol levels by up to 25%.



Safe Driving Tips

Employees should practice safe driving by wearing seatbelts, avoiding distractions, maintaining proper following distance, adhering to traffic laws and district policy, and taking regular breaks to prevent fatigue.

Check your vehicle: Before driving, perform a quick walk-around to check your tires and look for leaks, then adjust your seat, mirrors, and headrest inside the car. After buckling your seatbelt, turn the key to start the engine, and check the dashboard for warning lights, fuel level, and proper functioning of headlights, signals, and wipers before you begin your trip.

Before You Start the Engine

- Lock the doors. This is a crucial safety measure to prevent unauthorized entry while you are parked or distracted.
- Adjust the seat: Position yourself so that you can comfortably reach the pedals with slightly bent knees, and your wrists can rest on the steering wheel when your arms are extended.
- Adjust mirrors: Set the rear-view and side mirrors to provide the best possible view of the road and surroundings, ensure you can see the blind spots.
- Clear obstructions: Check that your windshield, windows, and mirrors are free of any items that could block your view.
- Familiarize yourself with controls: Take a moment to locate the headlights, windshield wipers, hazard lights, and turn signals.
- Ensure the parking brake is off: Before you shift into gear, remember to release the parking brake.
- Fasten your seat belt: Make sure the lap/shoulder straps are adjusted correctly.

Once the Engine is Running

- **Turn On Lights:** Check that your headlights, turn signals, and brake lights are working.
- **Check Dashboard:** Look for any warning lights on your dashboard
- **Check Fuel:** Make sure you have enough fuel.
- **Test Controls:** Turn on your wipers, horn, and heater/air conditioning to ensure they are functioning correctly.



- **Get Ready:** Ensure you are mentally and physically fit to drive and are familiar with the road conditions.

Get enough rest:

- Employees should prioritize rest and avoid driving when drowsy, wear seatbelts at all times, stay alert by minimizing distractions, maintain a safe following distance, and obey speed limits.
- Adhering to the district's cellphone policy, which often involves pulling over to make calls or send texts, is also crucial.
- Regular vehicle maintenance and understanding how to use safety features effectively are also key components of safe driving practices.
- Never drive when you are tired, and avoid driving if medications can cause drowsiness.

Plan your route:

- To plan your route:
- Use an online mapping tool like Google Maps by entering a starting point and destination.
- Always consider factoring in necessary rest stops, gas stations, and potential traffic delays.
- Allow plenty of time to reach your destination and plan your route to avoid busy roads and potential hazards.

While Driving

- **Wear a seatbelt:** Use a seatbelt every time you drive, regardless of trip length.
- **Eliminate distractions:** Avoid using mobile phones, eating, or engaging in conversations that take your attention away from the road.
- **Drive sober:** Do not drive if you are impaired by alcohol or drugs.
- **Maintain space:** Keep a safe following distance from the vehicle in front of you, typically 3-5 seconds, and increase it in poor weather or heavy traffic.
- **Drive defensively:** Be alert to changing road conditions and the actions of other drivers, pedestrians, and cyclists.
- **Follow rules:** Obey all traffic laws, posted speed limits, and any specific district driving policies.

During Long Trips

- **Take breaks:** Stop for a break every two hours or 100 miles to stretch, walk, and refresh yourself.
- **Stay alert to conditions:** Monitor changing weather, road conditions, and any detours.
- **Know when to stop:** If you feel tired or unwell, pull over to a safe location and rest.

National Protect Your Hearing Month

October is time to raise awareness about hearing. Think about your own hearing, and get your hearing checked if you think there might be a problem. Hearing protection is for everyone. There is no cure for hearing loss! You can prevent hearing loss by protecting your hearing. Avoid loud noise whenever possible and turn down the volume on personal listening devices. If you can't avoid loud noise, use earplugs/earmuffs to protect your ears.



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Types of Fire Extinguishers



Class A extinguishers put out fires in ordinary combustible materials such as cloth, wood, rubber, paper, and many plastics.



Class B extinguishers are used on fires involving flammables liquids such as grease, gasoline, oil, and oil-based paints.



Class C extinguishers are suitable for use on fires involving appliances, tools, or other equipment that is electrically energized or plugged in.



Class D extinguishers are designed for flammable metals, which burn at an extremely high heat. The Chemistry Department experiments with specific metals (i.e. sodium, potassium, aluminum, and magnesium) in very small quantities and has additional controls, along with a Class D extinguisher. This extinguisher is not to be used on other classes of fires.



Class K extinguishers are intended for use on fires that involve a high quantity of oils or fats used in a cooking environment. These extinguishers are generally found in commercial kitchens, restaurants and cafeterias. These are not required for personal kitchens/small scale cooking, but surely couldn't hurt!



It's Already Fall – Do We Still Need to Worry About the Heat?

MYTH OR FACT:

1. You can't get sunburned on a cloudy day.
2. Dark clothing offers better sun protection than light-colored clothing.
3. Sunscreen stops working after two hours, even if you don't go swimming.
4. If you're not thirsty, you're probably hydrated.
5. Water is the only way to stay hydrated.
6. Caffeine dehydrates you significantly in the summer.
7. Sunshine always improves your mood.
8. Taking a walk outside can help reduce stress--even for 10 minutes.
9. People don't experience seasonal mood changes in the summer.



Portable Ladder Safety

- Falls from portable ladders (step, straight, combination, extension) are one of the leading causes of occupational fatalities and injuries.
- Read and follow all labels/markings on the ladder.
- Avoid electrical hazards! – Look for overhead power lines before handling a ladder. Avoid using a metal ladder near power lines or exposed energized electrical equipment.
- Always inspect the ladder prior to using it. If the ladder is damaged, it must be removed from service and tagged until repaired or discarded.
- Always maintain a 3-point (two hands and a foot, or two feet and a hand) contact on the ladder when climbing. Keep your body near the middle of the step and always face the ladder while climbing.
- Only use ladders and appropriate accessories (ladder levelers, jacks or hooks) for their designed purposes.
- Ladders must be free of slippery material on the rungs, steps or feet.
- Do not use a self-supporting ladder (e.g., step ladder) as a



single ladder or in a partially closed position.

- Do not use the top step/rung of a ladder as a step/rung unless it was designed for that purpose.
- Use a ladder only on a stable and level surface, unless it has been secured (top or bottom) to prevent displacement.
- Do not place a ladder on boxes, barrels or other unstable bases to obtain additional height.
- Do not move or shift a ladder while a person or equipment is on the ladder. An extension or straight ladder used to access an elevated surface must extend at least 3 feet above the point of support (see diagram). Do not stand on the three top rungs of a straight, single or extension ladder.
- The proper angle for setting up a ladder is to place its base a quarter of the working length of the ladder from the wall or other vertical surface (see diagram).
- A ladder placed in any location where it can be displaced by other work activities must be secured to prevent displacement or a barricade must be erected to keep traffic away from the ladder.
- Be sure that all locks on an extension ladder are properly engaged.
- Do not exceed the maximum load rating of a ladder. Be aware of the ladder's load rating and of the weight it is supporting, including the weight of any tools or equipment.

Heat – Myth or Fact Answer Key

1. **Myth** – Up to 80% of UV rays can pass through clouds.
2. **Fact** – Darker fabrics absorb more UV rays, sometimes offering better protection.
3. **Fact** – Sunscreen can degrade over time; reapplying every 2 hours is recommended by experts.
4. **Myth** – Thirst is a late sign of dehydration but there are other signs, check your body cues like fatigue or dark urine.
5. **Myth** – Hydration can also come from fruits, vegetables, and beverages.
6. **Myth** – Moderate caffeine intake doesn't significantly dehydrate most.
7. **Myth** – While sun can boost mood for many, some people experience increased anxiety or agitation in summer.
8. **Fact** – Short nature walks have been linked to lower cortisol levels and better mood.
9. **Myth** – Seasonal Affective Disorder can occur in summer, though it's less common.