



wellness & safety



Schools Insurance Authority

Volume XXVI, No. 1 • September – October 2015

Get ready for fire safety inspections in the new school year

FPO Ken Kwong, Sacramento Fire Department

With the beginning of each school year come new expectations, new students and new staff members. It also means that annual school fire safety inspections are coming up. Here are some quick tips to help you prepare for, and pass, your upcoming inspections with as little disruption as possible:

- **“Spring” cleaning.** Look for any no-longer-usable items tucked away in a corner, or boxes stacked atop shelves, in cabinets and on the floor. Go through your room every year and toss whatever won’t be needed for the next.
- **Review previous site inspections.** This will give you an idea of what we saw last year and will help you identify things that you may need to fix before we visit this year.
- **Ask questions.** Whether this is your first inspection or your hundredth, there are always questions. Bounce questions and ideas off other staffers, or reach out to your local fire department, school district personnel or SIA for answers.
- **Expect the unexpected.** Some school sites don’t announce when inspections will take place. This allows the fire department to see how the school normally is.
- **Documentation.** Whether it’s the fire drill log, your site inspection/maintenance/testing documentation for your fire alarm and suppression systems, or your decorative material treatment, please have the paperwork ready. Our visit to your room or campus will be a little less intrusive if those hard-to-find documents (or Web pages that don’t always load) are ready for us.



These are just a few general tips and the ones I share with all my sites to help site inspections go more smoothly. We know that our presence can be disruptive, so by being prepared you can help us get through your school inspection faster. Have a great year!

Heads up when behind the wheel on Halloween

Amanda Corey, SIA Prevention Services

Halloween is always a fun holiday, but the potential for automobile-related accidents involving young pedestrians cannot be ignored each October 31. It’s a time when children and adults tend to be preoccupied and may not pay as much attention to safety as they should. In the fall, evening comes early and trick-or-treaters may not see or pay attention to moving vehicles; they may assume that their costumes are visible to drivers. Unfortunately, this is often not the case.



Stay on the defensive on Halloween and follow these tips to ensure a safe and fun night:

- **Slow down and be especially alert in residential neighborhoods.** Children are excited on Halloween and may move in unpredictable ways.
- **Pay extra attention, particularly to crosswalks, intersections and the sides of the road.** Kids tend to walk along curbs and cut across streets to get to other homes.

(continued on page 4)



Overcoming the stigma of mental illness

False beliefs about mental illness can be harmful in many ways, not the least of which involves stigma, or a negative value judgment attached to someone not considered “normal” or “psychologically sound.” Stigma can be obvious and direct, such as one person’s making a negative remark about someone else’s mental state or treatment. Or it can be more subtle, such as someone’s making negative assumptions about another’s stability, behavior or personality because of a mental health condition.

The social and cultural biases against those with mental illness often run deep, but education about and awareness of mental illness are making inroads and are offering positive ways to confront head-on the realities of stigma. Here are some of them:

- **Don’t go it alone.** Don’t let the fear of being “labeled” with a mental illness prevent you from seeking help. Treatment can provide relief by identifying what’s wrong in concrete terms and reducing symptoms that interfere with work and personal life.
- **Don’t let stigma create self-doubt and shame.** Stigma doesn’t just come from others. You yourself may have the mistaken belief that your condition is a sign of personal weakness, or that you should be able to control it without help. Seeking psychological counseling, educating yourself about your condition, and connecting with others with mental illness can help you gain self-esteem and overcome destructive self-judgment.
- **Don’t isolate yourself.** If you have a mental illness, you may be reluctant to tell anyone about it. Have the courage to confide in your spouse, family members, friends, clergy or other members of your community.
- **Reach out to people you trust for the compassion, support and understanding you need.**
- **Don’t equate yourself with your problem.** You are not an illness, so instead of saying “I’m bipolar,” say “I have bipolar disorder.” Instead of calling yourself “a schizophrenic,” call yourself “a person with schizophrenia.” Don’t say you “are depressed.” Say you “have clinical depression.”
- **Join a support group.** Some local and national groups, such as the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), offer programs and internet resources that can help reduce stigma by educating people with mental illness, their family members and the general public about the myths and realities involved. A number of state and federal agencies and programs also offer support for people who have mental health conditions.
- **Get help at school.** If you or your child has a mental illness that affects learning, find out what plans and programs might help. Discrimination against students because of a mental health condition is against the law, and educators at primary, secondary and college levels are required to accommodate students as best they can. Talk to teachers, professors or administrators about the best approaches and available resources. If a teacher doesn’t know about a student’s disability, it can lead to discrimination, barriers to learning and poor grades.
- **Speak out against stigma.** Express your opinions at events, in letters to the editor or on the internet. It can help instill courage in others facing similar challenges and educate the public about mental illness.

Others’ judgments about those with mental illness usually stem from a lack of understanding and information not based on facts. Learn to accept your condition and recognize what you need to do to manage it. Seeking support and educating others can make a big difference.

MHN is the EAP provider for SIA member districts. If your district participates in the EAP, you have access to services 24 hours a day, seven days a week. To learn more, contact your district’s human resources department or visit our website at www.sia-jpa.org.



World Mental Health
Day is October 10

'Difficult' people can be
challenging coworkers



wellness
& safety



Learning to work with 'difficult' people can be both challenging and productive

Michele Mariscal, SIA Prevention Specialist

We all come across "difficult" people in our work and personal lives, and sometimes we ourselves are the difficult ones, especially when we overreact to certain problems, personalities or circumstances. Stepping back enough to evaluate potentially volatile situations, and our own involvement in them, can help curb tension and restore harmony. The process starts with asking yourself what/whose needs are not being met and then addressing those issues with better, more insightful communication.

Here are seven "difficult" personality types and some suggestions for interacting with them:

- 1 Aggressive** – They want to force their viewpoints on you and may attack verbally.

DO: Ask them to sit down and explain what they have to say. Just listening without returning the anger can calm them down.

DON'T: Attack back.

- 2 Know-it-alls** – They're experts who have no patience for others' input.

DO: Listen to them and try to benefit from their knowledge.

DON'T: Be intimidated or let them take over a meeting.

- 3 Victims** – They often complain and feel they're being treated unfairly.

DO: Ask them for suggestions to improve the situation. Help them practice providing solutions.

DON'T: Try to become their protector.

- 4 Sarcastics** – They use words as weapons, often destroying harmony in a group and causing resentment.

DO: Compliment them when they say something positive or show team spirit.

DON'T: Let them get away with this behavior.

QUOTE TO NOTE
"Be yourself. Embrace
your quirks. Being weird
is a wonderful thing."
– Ed Sheeran



- 5 Naysayers** – They have nothing good to say about others' ideas.

DO: Invite them to suggest alternatives. Many times they'll back off when asked to participate constructively.

DON'T: Try to reform them.

- 6 Yaysayers** – They'll go along with anything to gain approval.

DO: Make sure they follow through on what they agree to do.

DON'T: Allow them to make more commitments than they can handle.

- 7 Withdrawns** – They seem to have nothing to contribute and are difficult to communicate with.

DO: Ask open-ended questions that require them to produce more than yes or no answers. Be patient about waiting for their answers.

DON'T: Nag them to open up.

Did you know that you can access our
newsletters on our website?
Visit www.sia-jpa.org.



- WeTip works to curb campus crime
- Safetyville events mean family fun

WeTip – Planning for the new school year

SIA member districts are reminded that they have the use of the WeTip anonymous crime-reporting hotline for free. Students and staff can call the WeTip hotline with the confidence that their identities are safe. This can be especially important for students who fear retaliation. There is no tracing of calls or any way to identify callers. For many crimes, there's a reward of up to \$1,000 per successful crime report outcome. A system has also been established to pay rewards anonymously. The hotline is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year.

Each district has a liaison for the program and you're encouraged to contact that person to request materials, arrange a school presentation on the program, or learn more about the program in general. For your liaison contact or for general information, contact Teresa Franco at tfranco@sia-jpa.org or 916-364-1281, ext. 256.



Heads up when behind the wheel on Halloween

(continued from page 1)

- **Enter and exit driveways and alleys slowly and carefully.**
- **Eliminate any distractions inside your car so you can concentrate on the road and your surroundings.**
- **Anticipate heavy pedestrian traffic and turn your headlights on earlier in the day to spot children from greater distances.**
- **Do not pass other vehicles that have stopped in the roadway as they could be dropping off children.** This is more common in rural areas, but can happen anywhere.
- **Communicate with other drivers.** Always use your turn signals. And if you have to pull over to drop off or pick up kids, turn on your hazard lights.
- **Popular trick-or-treating hours are 5:30 to 9:30 p.m.,** so be especially alert for kids during these hours.



Source: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

Upcoming Safetyville Events

Firefighter Chili Cook-Off
September 19 – noon to 4 p.m.

Halloween Haunt
October 17 – 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

For more information, visit www.safetycenter.org
or call (916) 438-3351.

The material in this newsletter should be part of your Injury and Illness Prevention Plan (IIPP).

Keep a copy of this newsletter in your IIPP binder and be sure all employees receive a copy.

Wellness & Safety is published by the Schools Insurance Authority, P.O. Box 276710, Sacramento, CA 95827-6710, (916) 364-1281, 1-877-SIA-KIDS. The SIA is a joint powers authority, composed of 35 members, that collectively provides workers' compensation, liability, property, and health benefit insurance coverage on behalf of its member districts. The SIA school districts are: Arcohe, Atwater, Buckeye, Camino, Center, Central Sierra ROP, El Dorado Co. Off. Ed., El Dorado High, Elk Grove, Elverta, Folsom-Cordova, Galt Elem., Galt High, Gold Oak, Gold Trail, Hayward, Indian Diggings, Latrobe, Merced City, Mother Lode, Natomas, North Bay SIA, Pioneer, Placerville, Pollock Pines, Rescue, River Delta, Robla, Sac. City, Sac. Co. Off. Ed., San Juan, Shasta-Trinity SIG, Silver Fork, Twin Rivers, and Woodland. SIA Officers: Executive Director — Martin Brady; President — Baldev Johal, El Dorado Union HSD; Vice President — David Roth, Buckeye Union SD; Secretary — Scott Nelson, Elk Grove USD; Prevention Services Director/Communications — Lisa Tremewan-Konarski; Newsletter: Vitali-Gage Communications, Inc.

www.sia-jpa.org ©2015