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## INSIDE...

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# Work-Based Learning

*By Jake Ruziecki, Risk Control Consultant*

Work-Based Learning (WBL) and other live work experiences present a unique opportunity for students to engage in real-life occupational training, allowing them to apply their knowledge and skills from the classroom to the workplace. Live work, while in essence a function of work-based learning, is often associated with the work or service itself that typically serves a real-world client. Work-based learning, however, is a broader brush that encompasses all forms of learning within the work environment such as job shadowing, career mentoring, internships or apprenticeships. Both areas can present unique challenges for schools.

When offering WBL and other live work experiences, schools need to be considerably involved in the development, management and periodic evaluation of these programs to protect the best interests of all stakeholders. Several risks that should be evaluated include:

**Liability Issues** that can arise from a number of areas including transportation, workers' compensation and other safety practices on the worksite. For example, who is responsible for student transportation? Who is responsible for liability coverage? Who is responsible for overseeing worksite safety programs?

**Contracts and Policies** that could either be informal, dated or otherwise inadequate based on current laws and standards of practice. We often see "canned" work orders or indemnity clauses for work order forms associated with live work. These may not always be legally sound or even applicable to the services being offered as part of the program.

**Legal and Regulatory Compliance** may not have adequate oversight for WBL arrangements and could create liability exposures as a result of programs not conforming to regulatory agencies or applicable labor laws, including those specific to minors.

**Worksite/Workplace Safety** may not be verified or even required of workplaces to provide adequate and safe equipment along with a healthful workplace. These worksites are also often required to conform to safety standards congruent with federal/state laws.

## To effectively manage these challenges and create an effective work-based learning program, schools should:

### Identify and coordinate insurance and liability issues.

- The school's legal counsel should assist in the preparation of a comprehensive school policy regarding potential liability in case of an accident or injury to a student participating in an unpaid worksite experience.

- Students participating in paid WBL are required to be covered by workers' compensation insurance while on the job. Work sites must provide certification of insurance to the schools to certify they have any necessary coverage.

- Work with instructors to help identify other potential liability exposures based on the scope of work students may perform. This may include seeking or verifying additional coverage for students including professional liability, products liability or medical malpractice.

### Periodically review and revise contracts or work order forms.

- Live work could include a number of services offered to the public such as automotive repair, cosmetology, construction or health services. Any work order form for these services should be reviewed by the school's legal counsel at least every two years, or more frequently based on any legal changes, service changes, or upon review of any incidents or disputes.

- Work order forms for school-operated live work should also include a hold-harmless agreement, or indemnity clause, in favor of the school, which should also notate that the services offered are performed by students in a learning environment.

### Ensure legal and regulatory compliance.

- Periodically review policies with legal counsel to ensure all parties are following regulatory agency requirements and applicable labor laws.

- Any worksites participating in a WBL program are required to meet the same standards of care as schools regarding employee hiring and screening practices. Verify that any worksite employees interacting with children are obtaining background clearances, criminal history checks and child abuse history certification.

### Ensure worksite/workplace safety standards are met.

- Worksites involved in a WBL program need to provide adequately safe equipment and a safe and healthful workplace in conformance with any state or federal health and safety standards/laws.

- Worksites should provide schools with copies of their written health and safety programs.

- Worksites should be periodically inspected by the school staff or other subject matter experts to ensure a safe and healthful workplace.

Involvement from staff, students, worksites, school board and legal teams in a work-based learning program creates a safer learning and working environment for all parties. Review your state Department of Education's guidelines and program manuals for requirements of all work-based learning opportunities to ensure compliance, eliminate risks, and ensure a safe and healthful worksite for students.

**Sources:**

*Kentucky WBL Manual* – https://www.education.ky.gov/CTE/cter/Documents/Work-Based_Learning_Manual.pdf

*Kentucky WBL Liability Checklist* – https://www.education.ky.gov/CTE/cter/Documents/WBL_Liability_Checklist.pdf

*PA WBL Toolkit* – https://www.education.pa.gov/Documents/K-12/Career%20and%20Technical%20Education/Toolkits/Work-based%20Learning%20Toolkit.pdf

**BLOG**

Learn more about managing work-based learning risk at **cmregent.com/blog/**.

# Occupational Contact Dermatitis

## IN SCHOOL SETTINGS

By Dennis Kane, Senior Risk Control Consultant

Occupational contact dermatitis (OCD) is a skin condition that can affect workers in various positions within a school entity. It can occur when the skin comes into contact with irritants or allergens in the workplace, leading to inflammation and discomfort and possibly costly insurance claims. Understanding the causes, symptoms and prevention strategies for OCD is essential for both employees and employers to ensure a safe workplace.

### There are two main types of OCD: Irritant Contact Dermatitis and Allergic Contact Dermatitis.

### Irritant Contact Dermatitis

This is the most common form and occurs when the skin is exposed to substances that cause direct damage. Common irritants include:

- **Chemical cleaners and solvents** that could affect maintenance, custodial, kitchen staff and could also include vocational education instructors.
- **Friction** from repeated handwashing or rubbing that could affect kitchen staff and custodial staff while performing cleaning tasks.
- **Environmental factors** like cold weather and excessive moisture that could affect maintenance and grounds crews and custodial and kitchen staff.

### Allergic Contact Dermatitis

This occurs when the skin develops an allergic reaction to a substance after prior sensitization. Common allergens include:

- **Metals dusts and shavings and lubricants** that could affect maintenance staff and vocational shop instructors.
- **Fragrances, topicals and sprays** in cosmetics that could affect vocational staff in a cosmetology salon.
- Certain **plants** like poison ivy and poison oak that could affect grounds crews.
- Contact with **latex** if disposable latex gloves are worn.

### Symptoms of OCD will vary depending on the severity and type of dermatitis but generally include:

- Red, inflamed skin.
- Itching or burning sensations.
- Dry, scaly patches or blisters.
- Cracked skin, which may lead to secondary infections.

Risk factors include pre-existing skin conditions, personal hygiene habits and frequency of exposure with those exposed on a daily, ongoing basis being more susceptible.

### The prevention of occupational contact dermatitis involves both employee and management efforts and includes the following best practices:

- **Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) –** Wearing gloves, masks and protective clothing can shield the skin from irritants and allergens. Examples are chemical impervious gloves and aprons and/or Tyvek suits.
- **Training –** Provide workers with information about potential skin hazards and safe handling techniques. This information should be specific to the task or job. Example: For chemical exposures, review of Safety Data Sheets (SDS) and following recommended PPE prior to using a chemical.
- **Hygiene Practices –** Encouraging good skin care habits, such as regular moisturizing and proper handwashing techniques, can help maintain skin integrity.
- **Substitution of Harmful Substances –** Whenever possible, replacing harmful chemicals with safer alternatives can significantly reduce risk.

Occupational contact dermatitis and skin allergies can occur within a school entity, but awareness of the causes, symptoms and prevention strategies can minimize the risk. If you suspect a specific cause to OCD, zero exposure through temporary job reassignment could be used to help verify the cause. If temporary job reassignment does not work, medical treatment by a school approved physician is necessary.

**BLOG**

Learn more about managing risk at **cmregent.com/blog/**.

# ABCs of P-O-O-L Safety

*By Patrick Rucinski, Risk Control Consultant*

**A**   **Adult Supervision** – Always have a responsible adult watching patrons in and around the pool. Even experienced swimmers can get into trouble!

**B**   **Barriers** – Install fences, gates and pool covers to prevent unauthorized access. Self-closing and self-latching barriers help keep the pool area secure.

**C**   **CPR** – Ensure all staff within the pool area are trained in CPR. Quick action can save a life with proper training.

**D**   **Drain Covers** – Use appropriate drain covers to avoid entrapment. Make sure covers comply with current safety standards. Drain covers should be regularly inspected for damage and to verify end-of-service life has not been exceeded.

**E**   **Emergency Plan** – Have a plan for what to do in emergency situations, including having a phone near the pool. Emergency plans should be regularly practiced and updated to avoid complacency.

**F**   **Flotation Device**s – Flotation devices and life jackets in a variety of sizes should be readily available. Avoid relying on inflatable toys, as they are not substitutes for life saving equipment.

**G**   **Glass-Free Zone** – Keep glassware away from the pool area to avoid breakage and injuries. Any windows or glass within the pool or observation areas should conform to ANSI Z97 standards.

**H**   **Hydration** – Drink plenty of water, especially during exercise. Dehydration can lead to cramps or other issues that can increase the risk of accidents in the water.

**I**   **Inspect Regularly** – Inspect pool equipment and surroundings for hazards. Regular maintenance reduces the risk of injury and ensures a safe swimming environment.

**J**   **Jumping** – Ensure safe jumping and diving areas with proper depth; do not allow diving in shallow water. Clearly mark areas where diving is not permitted to avoid head and spinal injuries.

**K**   **Keep Pool Area Clear** – Remove toys and other objects from the pool area when not in use. This will help reduce slips/trips/falls. This reduction in distractions will deter patrons from using the pool unsupervised.

**L**   **Learn to Swim** – Enroll everyone, especially children, in swimming lessons. Knowing how to swim builds confidence and helps prevent panic in the water.

**M** **Monitor the Weather** – Weather conditions should be monitored while using the pool. Avoid using outdoor pools during storms, especially if there is lightning. If you hear thunder, leave the water immediately.

**N** **No Running** – Enforce "no running" rules around the pool area. Wet surfaces are very slippery and can lead to serious slip/trip/fall injuries.

**O** **Open Pool Only with Supervision** – Never allow anyone to use the pool unsupervised. A certified lifeguard must be present when the pool is in use.

**P** **Pool Rules** – Clearly post and enforce pool rules. Consistent enforcement will help prevent dangerous behavior and activities.

**Q** **Quick Reaction Time** – Be vigilant and ready to act in the event of an emergency. Seconds count in a water emergency; being prepared makes all the difference.

**R** **Rescue Equipment** – Keep a life ring or shepherd's hook by the pool for easy access during emergencies. Verify that pool users know where these items are located, and how to use them.

**S** **Sunscreen** – Apply waterproof sunscreen to protect skin from harmful UV rays. Sunscreen should be reapplied every two hours, or more often if swimming or sweating.

**T** **Temperature** – Ensure the water temperature is comfortable for swimmers. Extremely cold water can lead to hypothermia, especially in younger children and older adults.

**U** **Understanding Limitations** – Know your swimming abilities and do not overestimate them. Avoid challenging yourself beyond your skill level, especially in deep or turbulent water.

**V** **Ventilation** – Ensure good ventilation in indoor pools to avoid inhaling harmful chemicals, like chlorine vapors. Proper air circulation also helps prevent respiratory irritation and other health issues.

**W** **Watch for Fatigue** – Know when to take breaks, as swimming can be physically tiring. Resting periodically can prevent exhaustion, keeping swimmers alert and safe.

**X** **eXit Strategy** – Have a safe exit strategy in place for swimmers and patrons. Make sure pool ladders, steps and other exit points are clearly visible and easily accessible.

**Y** **Yard Safety** – Ensure the area around the pool is free of hazards. Regularly inspect for items that could cause slips/trips/falls and clear the area before swimming.

**Z** **Zero Tolerance for Horseplay** – Enforce a strict "no horseplay" rule for all pool patrons. Roughhousing in and around the pool can lead to unintended injuries or panic, especially for less confident swimmers.

## NO RUNNING
### IN THE POOL AREA

**Have a safety question?** Ask our experts at **cmregent.com/risk-control/ask/**

# Safety Committees

*By Edgar Boord, Risk Control Consultant*

Effective communication can often be the most crucial aspect in enhancing workplace safety and creating a conducive safety culture. This communication could be between employees/administration/visitors, incorporated into various processes, or utilized as a cautionary measure for hazard identification and reducing risk.

In this first part of the communication series, we will discuss effective communication as it pertains to safety committees. An effective safety committee can often be a major driving force in enhancing individual safety awareness, hazard identification, and implementing the appropriate controls to reduce risk exposure. Healthy communication between the safety committee, your school's administration and employees can pave the way for effective controls and risk minimization.

## The Benefits

- Creates a positive safety presence by demonstrating vigilance in reducing risk to employees.
- Allows employees to become engaged and participate in safety-related efforts.
- Introduces policies, procedures and other best management practices for consideration and implementation by school administration.

- Ensures thorough accident investigation procedures are in place so investigation findings can be reviewed for development of effective safety controls and other corrective actions.
- Risk reduction strategies and incident prevention can lead to a lower experience modification rating for your school, which can reduce insurance costs.
  – Certified safety committees in Pennsylvania also receive a 5% discount on their workers' compensation premium.

## Safety Considerations

**Meeting Minutes –** When made available or distributed to all staff on a routine basis, meeting minutes can share valuable information pertaining to safety measures, initiatives and other controls. This allows individuals to remain informed and participate in any safety-related efforts (i.e., hazard identification, procedural changes).

**Safety Suggestions/Concerns –** To compliment the distribution of meeting minutes, allowing employees to submit any safety suggestions and/or concerns is a great way to increase staff member participation.

- Routine communication to all employees about meeting minutes availability, and encouraging safety suggestions/concerns, can be an effective method for increasing participation in safety efforts.

**Recommended Actions –** As corrective and preventative actions are developed by the committee, the actions should first be approved by administrators having authority prior to implementation. This allows the school's administration to show their commitment to safety through the development and incorporation of recommended actions.

**Training and Awareness –** Distributing safety-related information and assigning specific training on pertinent safety topics can be an excellent method for increasing individual awareness as well as creating a conducive safety culture in the workplace. Based on incident trends and common workplace hazards, the safety committee can

recommend training and information for staff to enhance their understanding of hazards and incident prevention.

**Policy and Procedural Changes –** Clearly communicating policies, programs and procedures that affect employees can ensure established safety controls are in place and completed during routine operations.

**Member Communication –** The safety committee can be the "face of safety" in the workplace. Encouraging committee members to establish communication with school employees can assist with creating an effective safety culture. Developing a rapport with employees in the workplace can be a catalyst for positively impacting an individual's approach to safety.

**Internal Communication –** Communication within the safety committee is a vital component of its effectiveness. This should include:

- Distributing the meeting agenda to members ahead of a meeting.
- Maintaining thorough meeting minutes for documentation and future review.
- Ensuring committee members document verbal suggestions or concerns that are communicated by employees.
- Reviewing and discussing incident details on a regular basis to identify trends and problem areas.

In summary, communication can play a key role in maximizing your safety committee's effectiveness. As with any initiative, the outcome and benefits are very much dependent on the effort that is put in. Through proper documentation, distribution of awareness information, and providing school employees with an on-site resource for safety matters, a safety committee is much more capable of establishing the desired foundation of an effective safety culture.



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# AUTOMATIC
# Extinguishing Systems

*By Derek Neubauer, Senior Risk Control Consultant*

A kitchen automatic extinguishing system is specifically designed to detect and extinguish fires in kitchens, where the risk of fire is elevated due to the use of high-temperature cooking equipment and the presence of flammable oils and grease. These systems provide critical protection in cafeterias, concession stands and culinary kitchens, helping to minimize fire damage, reduce downtime and safeguard lives.

## Not having an automatic extinguishing system in a kitchen poses significant risks. Here are some of them:

- **Increased Fire Risk and Damage:** Without an automatic extinguishing system, fires can quickly grow out of control, spreading from cooking equipment to other parts of the kitchen and buildings, leading to extensive damage.

- **Risk to Human Life:** The absence of an automatic suppression system increases the likelihood of injuries or fatalities among kitchen staff due to uncontrolled fires, burns and smoke inhalation. Fires can cause panic, and the lack of a quick suppression response may make evacuation more challenging, putting lives at risk.

- **Loss of Property:** A fire can cause extensive property damage, leading to closure of the building. This can result in significant financial losses due to repairs, lost inventory and downtime. Fires that are not immediately suppressed can lead to more severe structural damage, equipment loss and costly cleanup efforts.

- **Inadequate Manual Response:** Manual firefighting efforts may be slow, ineffective or dangerous, especially when dealing with grease fires that require special extinguishing agents. Relying solely on staff to respond to a fire may be insufficient, as panic or lack of proper training can delay response times, allowing the fire to worsen.

## Just having an automatic extinguishing system in place isn't enough. Here are some best practices to ensure your system will perform when needed:

- **Regular Inspections:** Automatic extinguishing systems must undergo regular inspections and maintenance every six months as specified by the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA 96) standards to ensure proper operation.

- **Nozzle and System Placement:** Proper design and installation are critical to ensure coverage of high-risk areas. When changing out cooking equipment, a certified fire protection professional should be consulted to ensure where an automatic extinguishing system is required. Typical school kitchen cooking equipment that requires an automatic extinguishing system includes deep fryers, gas/electric range, tilt skillet/braising pan, grill and broilers.

- **Concession Stands:** Some do not believe their concession stand kitchens should have these systems, but if the kitchen has any equipment that produces grease laden vapors, an automatic extinguishing system is required.

- **Manual Pull Station:** While automatic, systems are often equipped with a manual pull station for emergency activation by staff. These pull stations should be kept clear and all staff trained on their location and usage.

In summary, kitchen automatic extinguishing systems play a vital role in school kitchen safety, providing rapid response and efficient suppression of potentially devastating fires. Ensuring compliance with installation, inspection and maintenance standards is key to maximizing their effectiveness.

**BLOG** Learn more about kitchen safety at **cmregent.com/blog/**.

# Avoid Clothes-mindedness
## *with laundry dryer safety tips*

By Mark Nease, Senior Risk Control Consultant

Schools use laundry dryers in various functions, including family consumer science classrooms, kitchens/culinary arts programs and custodial/maintenance operations. While laundry dryers present a variety of health and fire risks, they can be used safely with planning, preventative maintenance and care.

## Common hazards associated with the use of laundry dryers include:

- Gas dryers operate with natural gas or liquified petroleum gas (LPG). Using an **incompatible fuel source** could result in an inoperable dryer and a likely fire.

- Light commercial and residential electric dryers operate on circuits up to 240 volts and commercial laundry dryers typically use three-phase voltages. Using i**ncorrect sized wiring or circuit breakers** can result in a fire.

- **Lint hazards** – Lint develops as your laundry dryer tears incremental bits of material from your textiles during each drying cycle. Lint can easily burn—resulting in a Class A fire.

- Air exhaust vent pipe – Combustion of gas creates **carbon monoxide**, which can only escape through the exhaust vent pipe. Carbon monoxide can accumulate in your laundry room if the vent pipe becomes restricted—causing harm to occupants.

- Never place **oily rags** in your dryer, even if just washed, and avoid storing or using flammable liquids near a dryer in operation. A textile fire can suddenly occur if remnants of combustible liquids remain on your textiles.

## Best practices for the use of laundry dryers:

- Use **compatible fuel sources**. Never mix the appliance with the incorrect gas; that is, be sure to use a natural gas compatible dryer when using natural gas as the fuel source and an LPG compatible dryer when using liquified petroleum gas (propane) as the fuel source. Mixing these can result in an inoperable dryer and a likely fire.

- Ensure **proper electrical installations**. All wiring and circuit breaker equipment must be capable of handling the electrical load drawn—otherwise a Class C electrical fire can occur.

- **Prevent lint fires**.
  - Only operate the laundry dryer with a clean lint filter in place.
  - Be sure to clean the lint filter before or after each dryer use and dispose of the lint in the trash.
  - Lint can accumulate around the drum, the rotating compartment inside your dryer—don't overlook cleaning the drum of lint.
  - At least annually, the exhaust duct to the exterior should be cleaned to remove accumulated lint debris.

- **Monitor for carbon monoxide** when gas fuel sources are used.
  - Make sure the exhaust vent flap opens fully when operating the dryer.
  - Since lint seems to find its way into this piping, it is crucial that staff periodically clean the exhaust piping.
  - Carbon monoxide is a colorless and odorless gas. Install a carbon monoxide detector to alert occupants of carbon monoxide levels that could render them unconscious.

- **Never store or use flammable liquids** in the same room as your laundry dryer.
  - Storing or using flammable liquids near the dryer while it is in operation can result in an explosion and interior fire loss.
  - Most flammable liquids are heavier than air, which means the flammable vapors "hug" the floor—that, along with the dryer pulling in that flammable air, can lead to an ignition and resulting explosion.
  - Only hand wash oily rags and then hang-dry them.

Laundry dryers are widely used, but their use doesn't come without safety risks. Take time today to consider various risks and best practices with your laundry dryers so you can safely complete your textile-drying tasks within applicable educational curriculums or support staff departments.

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