

## Safety – The Answer is in Front of Us

### Backwards to Safety? Walking Tips for Teachers

School safety is a hot topic, and no one will argue against the paramount importance of maintaining the safety of our students. Unfortunately, the safety and wellness of our staff is often overlooked. Puget Sound Workers' Compensation Trust (PSWCT) is committed to preventing injuries to our school district staff and offers some simple steps to help avoid accidents.

Our recent data analysis showed that slips, trips, and falls (STF) are the most frequent injuries occurring in buildings. Because teachers are the largest employee group, it is not surprising that we found most of our STF injuries are occurring among teaching staff. While that is not news that makes us happy, we do have some good news to share. Many STF injuries are preventable.

### Where do the Hazards Hide?

Teachers have busy and active jobs. From the classroom to the playground to the lunchroom they are exposed to numerous uncontrolled environments. What we found is that many teaching staff are injuring themselves by **walking backwards** in these areas. It makes sense – it can seem like a necessary part of supervising kids during transitions.

### New Strategies

Here are a few tips to help you avoid the dangers of walking backwards:

- **Hold A Sign** – It works for crossing guards and is familiar to students. You lead and they follow. Try having a sign in each hand (stop/go, loud/quiet, etc.). Attach a small mirror to your sign.
- **Walking Contract** – When establishing class rules, hold students accountable with a contract.
- **Change Your Position** – Follow the group from behind and assign a student leader.
- **Reward** – Create a schoolwide contest for best transitions.

We challenge you to try one of these simple tips. Hazards are all around us: food scraps, dropped pencils, spilled water, and uneven surfaces. Even the smallest obstruction can lead to an injury and workers' compensation claim. Is it worth losing valuable teaching time, finding a replacement substitute teacher for a few weeks, or diverting money away from important budget items? The answer is right in front of us. Want more information about safe practices?

Contact [Steve Lyons](#) or [Jessica Guy](#) of PSWCT's safety team.

