

# Risk Manager

Answers, resources and information to help assess and reduce risk

## Alternative Methods for Delivering Safety Awareness Training By Kyle Stewart

Each day, school districts across the state devote countless hours to educating the future generations of students on a variety of subject matters; coincidentally, many of these same school districts are missing an opportunity to educate and provide safety awareness training to their staff members on a regular basis. Understandably, dedicating time to conduct safety awareness training on a regular basis presents many unique challenges. In particular, attempting to schedule training that allows all district staff members to attend at one time is often unfeasible; however, the philosophy of safety awareness training often leads one to believe that large blocks of time must be dedicated in order to conduct safety training. Alternative approaches to providing safety awareness training that works with staff members' schedules and increases safety awareness/accountability should be given further thought.

Consider what opportunities currently exist that could be used as a forum to communicate safety awareness. Back-to-school in-service days first come to mind; however, this may not be the best opportunity due to the amount of other state-mandated training and the building/classroom preparations activities concurrently conducted at this time. Regardless of the type of training, the goal of the training is for staff members to *retain* the information being communicated. A forum for training that is often overlooked is monthly faculty and departmental meetings. These meetings provide an ideal opportunity to incorporate and conduct brief (i.e., two- to five-minute) safety discussions

applicable to the intended audience.

The purpose of conducting regular, short safety discussions during monthly faculty and departmental meetings is two-fold: to accommodate scheduling conflicts that arise and to reinforce staff members' retention of the training. Individuals have a propensity to retain only a small amount of information learned in a single training session. By conducting small training sessions on safety awareness, staff members' ability to recall information may be increased. Another key benefit of having the safety discussions during faculty and departmental meetings is that the discussion topics can be individualized to the types of workers' compensation injuries occurring within the staff members' respective building and throughout the district. If staff members are able to apply the training to their daily work activities, they may be more likely to remember and implement safety measures.

Varying delivery methods of safety awareness training can also have an impact on an individual's ability to retain the information. Some staff members learn more effectively through verbal lecture discussions, small-group roundtable discussions or written formats, while some gain knowledge through computer-based training programs. However, the sole use of computer-based safety training programs should be done with caution. Many computer-based safety training programs are "canned" topics that may or may not be entirely applicable to the intended audience.

Secondly, individuals participating in a computer-based training program may be inclined to multitask during the training, which may affect their ability to retain the information. Computer-based safety training programs can help reinforce and correct unsafe work practices/behaviors or provide initial training to newly hired employees until they can attend the next scheduled safety training seminar.

Remember, when thinking about safety awareness training, don't assume that every new staff member has received such training at their previous employer, or that every current employee has retained the information provided during previous sessions.

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For additional information or training on best practices and safety management within your school entity, please contact Director of Risk Management Sharon Orr at (866) 401-6600, ext. 7152 or [sorr@cmregent.com](mailto:sorr@cmregent.com).