

Safety First Newsletter

NMPSIA Risk Services News & Updates



IN THIS ISSUE

Deck the Halls with Boughs of Safety	1
OSHA Ladder Safety Quickcard	2
Safe Holiday Shopping	3
Fentanyl & Opioid Abuse & EOPs	4
Bullying Cases Costing Schools Millions	5
STOPit! Anonymous Reporting System	6
Ergo Corner: Picking the Right Office Chair	7
Protecting Your Buildings from the Winter Cold	9
Winter Weather Checklist	9
Cleaning Tips for Cold & Flu Season	10
Kitchen Safety Checklist	11
IPRA Compliance Concerns	12
2024 Conference Schedule	13

Deck the Halls With Boughs of Safety

The holiday season is full of distractions, which can hurt productivity and safety in the workplace. Employees may be busy planning dinners, hosting out-of-town family members, purchasing gifts, and figuring out the logistics of other festive activities. It's important to consider how these distractions affect employees. Here is a list of potential risks and ideas for preventing accidents and injuries.

Fatigue

People are more likely to be tired and worn out during the holiday season due to all those extra tasks and responsibilities. That **fatigue** can pose a big problem on the job, as many workplace injuries and accidents happen when employees are tired or run down. Although fatigue is a complex issue lacking a simple solution, it might be a good idea to consider longer breaks or altering work schedules to help compensate for seasonal fatigue.

Rushing and Frustration

While employees are dealing with hectic personal schedules, the holidays can also be one of the busiest times at work as well. That added stress can impact employees' emotional state, causing them to rush and increasing the likelihood of slips, trips, falls, or forgetting to perform small but vital tasks. Reminding co-workers that safety comes first, even during busy times like the holidays, is essential. Managers should make it clear to employees that their safety is more important than rushing through a job.



Continued on Page 2

Deck the Halls with Boughs of Safety (Continued)

Ladder safety

Many workers are tasked with decorating the workplace for the holiday season. That means an increased use of ladders and the risk of injury. All workers should be provided a refresher on safe ladder practices like ensuring the ladder's stability before use, keeping three points of contact at all times, and never placing a ladder on a surface other than the ground. Another good idea is to decorate in pairs or groups. (see **OSHA Ladder Safety Quickcard at right**)

Electrical safety

Thousands of people are treated each holiday for injuries from electric shock or electrical fire. The misuse of sometimes old and faulty decorations and carelessness is often the cause of these accidents. Ensure all decorative lights have been tested for safety, are undamaged, and never overload the sockets. Employees should also be reminded about the importance of unplugging decorations for the night and never using electric lights on a metallic tree.

Slips, Trips, and Falls

All holiday lights and decorations should be clearly visible and kept out of the way to prevent tripping. Walkways should also be promptly cleared of snow and ice. Also, consider providing new or additional mats to stop snow and water from being brought inside working areas. (see more on winter weather safety on page 10)

Food Safety

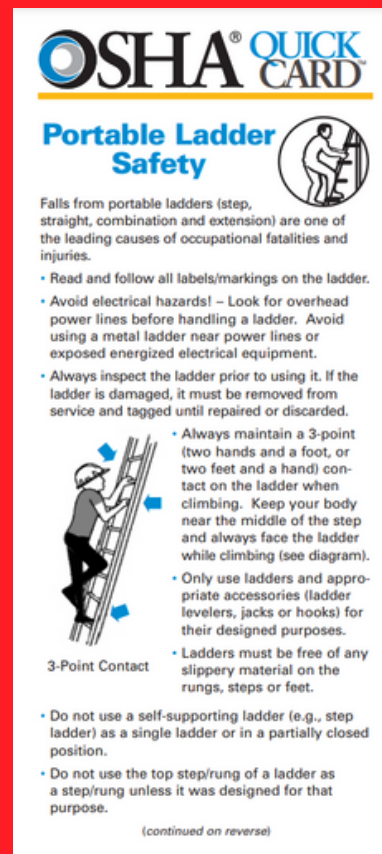
We all have our favorite holiday dishes, but many workplaces don't take adequate precautions when ordering or storing those dishes for holiday gatherings. Follow **food handling guidelines** when preparing, storing, and distributing all food. Be mindful of food-related allergies and ensure that anything with allergens is labeled appropriately and kept separately from other foods.

Drunk and Drowsy Driving

Work and family gatherings are often an opportunity for people to have a few drinks, but it is imperative that no one is allowed to get behind the wheel after consuming alcohol. When organizing an event where alcohol is served, remember there are various charities and companies that offer discounted ride-sharing options and some that will even drive people home in their own cars, preventing worries and logistical problems about vehicles being left somewhere overnight.

If training and culture are strong in an organization, safety becomes a state of mind, not an item on a to-do list. So when the winter holidays get nearer, it's time to remind workers that safety doesn't take a vacation just because they do. After all, holidays are supposed to be a joyous time, and everyone wants to make it through the season incident-free.

OSHA Ladder Safety Quickcard (Download Here)



OSHA® QUICK CARD


Portable Ladder Safety

Falls from portable ladders (step, straight, combination and 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 (see diagram).
- Only use ladders and appropriate accessories (ladder levelers, jacks or hooks) for their designed purposes.
- Ladders must be free of any 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.

(continued on reverse)

- 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.



For more information:
OSHA Occupational Safety and Health Administration
U.S. Department of Labor
www.osha.gov (800) 321-OSHA (6742)



Safe Holiday Shopping

All of us will be doing plenty of shopping this holiday season, creating unique safety concerns, whether you are shopping in person or online. Here are some simple steps to stay safe during holiday shopping.

Staying Safe Online

- Use antivirus software on your computer and your phone and make sure they are up to date.
- Never follow links from emails or open attachments when you don't recognize the sender. Double check the name and email address of the person who sent the file or link – sometimes scammers will send emails using the name of someone you know but an incorrect email address.
- Go to the website directly (Target, Amazon, Walmart, etc.), not through third-party links. Also, consider using an app if the store has an official one; this will help you avoid typing in the web address incorrectly.
- Download the app only from the store's official website or an official source like the Apple Store or Google Play with ratings/reviews to ensure you are not downloading a fake app.
- Double check the website address for typos – sometimes fake websites will be created with a web address like a valid retailer to steal the information you type in.
- Use credit cards to make online purchases. Debit cards are linked to checking accounts and if a criminal gains access to these accounts they can drain funds quickly. Credit cards also generally offer more protection if the card number is stolen.
- Do not use public Wi-Fi for financial transactions.
- Use a unique, strong password for any site where you input personal data/payment information.
 - Use a hard-to-guess sentence
 - Use three random words
 - Use lower and upper case letters, numbers, and symbols
 - Use a unique password for each website
 - Do not use personal information (like your pet's name) for passwords.
- Always log off from the site after you have completed your transaction.
- Check your banking statements for unauthorized purchases regularly.

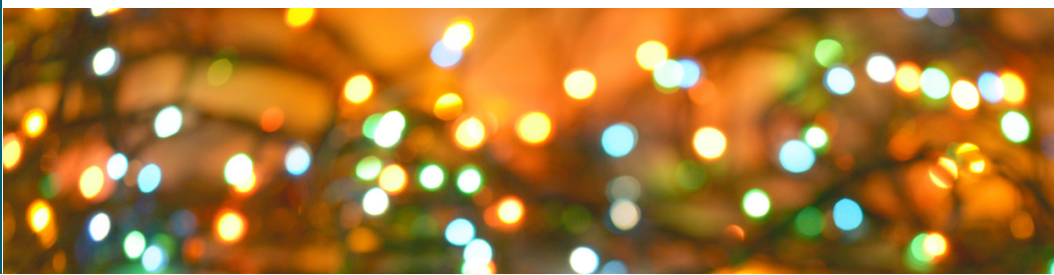
Basic Shopping Safety

- Be aware of your surroundings, especially when moving in transition spaces.
- Park close to your destination, in a well-lit area. Lock all packages in the trunk and out of sight.
- Carry your purse close to your body and stow your wallet inside a zippered pocket.
- Report any suspicious activity or unattended packages to store/mall security or law enforcement.
- Keep your car key handy and lock your doors as soon as you get inside your vehicle.

For additional information, please reach out to a POMS Security Consultant:

James Vautier:
jvautier@pomsassoc.com

Grant Banash:
gbanash@pomsassoc.com



The Importance of Integrating Fentanyl and Opioid Overdoses in School Emergency Management Plans



Additional Resources:

POMS Sr. Security Manager:

James Vautier

jvautier@pomsassoc.com

[Guide for Developing High-Quality School Emergency Operations Plans - Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools \(REMS\) TA Center](#)

[Guide for Developing High-Quality Emergency Operations Plans for Institutions of Higher Education - REMS TA Center](#)

[The Role of Districts in Developing High-Quality School Emergency Operations Plans: A Companion to the School Guide - REMS TA Center](#)

[Opioid Overdoses and Drug-Related Emergencies](#)

[Stop Overdose - U.S. Department of Health and Human Services \(HHS\), CDC](#)

[Fentanyl Facts - HHS, CDC](#)

The threat of fentanyl and opioid misuse continues to rise in our schools and communities. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), **overdose deaths related to synthetic opioids**, including fentanyl, have jumped dramatically in the last decade. Among other findings, the CDC says, that among Americans aged 10-19, overdose deaths involving illicitly manufactured fentanyl increased by 182 percent between 2019 and 2021. These tragedies affect students, staff, and faculty, as well as parents, guardians, family members, classmates, and more.

The opioid crisis is also evolving. The United States recently designated fentanyl combined with xylazine (a non-opioid tranquilizer approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration for veterinary use) as an **emerging threat**.

Core planning teams should address fentanyl and opioid overdoses in their emergency operations plans (EOPs). When developing or updating the EOP, planning teams can look at the threat from fentanyl and opioid-related overdoses from the angle of before, during, and after an incident, as well as within the framework of prevention, protection, mitigation, response, and recovery. It is also important for planning teams to conduct this work in collaboration with community partners, such as local law enforcement, local public health authorities, county district attorney offices, local representatives of the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), and community or youth organizations that address substance misuse prevention.

To support core planning teams in integrating this threat into their emergency planning efforts, the Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools (REMS) TA Center has shared a **new fact sheet** on fentanyl and opioids for K-12 schools, school districts, and Institutions of Higher Education. This fact sheet provides education agencies with information and strategies for addressing fentanyl and opioid overdoses on their campuses through EOPs and other preparedness activities, such as having naloxone on hand for emergency treatment, awareness, and training.



Bullying Fast Facts

- More than 1 in 5 students ages 12 to 18 report being bullied at school (2019)
- Girls were more often excluded, insulted, and the target of rumors, while boys were more frequently tripped, shoved, or spit on.
- Nearly half of teens have experienced cyberbullying.

-[Pew Research Center](#)

Bullying Resources

POMS Sr. Security Manager:

James Vautier

jvautier@pomsassoc.com

[Olweus Bullying Prevention Program](#)

[KiVa Program](#)

[Positive Action Program](#)

[Cyberbullying Research Center](#)

988lifeline.org

Crisis Lifeline: dial 988

Bullying Cases Costing Schools Millions

The problem of bullying in our schools is persistent and devastating. And in the last several years, it has also become a costly issue. A recent **Washington Post analysis** found nearly 200 incidents in recent years when a bullied student took his or her own life. Nearly 10% of those suicides involved children ages 7 to 10. Research also shows that LGBTQ+ students are at much greater risk of being bullied and attempting suicide than their peers.

Aside from the human toll, these tragedies often result in lawsuits that can cost schools and districts millions of dollars. For instance, the Cincinnati Public School District reached a \$3 million settlement with one family in 2021. Other high-profile cases include a settlement in Utah for \$2 million (2023), a \$5 million settlement in Connecticut (2023), and another in New Jersey for \$9.1 million (2023).

Families involved in those lawsuits argue that schools have a legal obligation to keep children safe, and many political leaders agree: Fifty states have enacted laws to combat school bullying, including New Mexico. But, in day-to-day school life, some policies are not strong enough or not enforced.

The Problem

The Washington Post investigation found that efforts to curtail bullying are not a priority for many schools across the nation, especially after the pandemic left schools with even greater needs than before. Experts also point out that bullying does not "cause" suicide, which typically happens for a complex set of reasons. A student who is being bullied may also struggle with mental illness, early childhood trauma, family conflict, sexual or gender identity issues, or many other challenges. Still, there is no question that bullying causes harm. Research shows students who are bullied are more likely to be depressed and anxious and to feel increased sadness and loneliness. Their grades at school often drop. Their absences rise. Sleep and eating habits can deteriorate. They face an increased risk for suicide-related behavior, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Bullying is not always apparent to families, and many incidents go unrecorded by schools. Students don't always discuss what's happening. Some kids think it's not solvable. Others don't want to worry parents, or they believe that if a bully gets in trouble, it will only provoke more abuse.

The internet and smartphones have also given rise to types of bullying that many earlier generations never knew. Now, cruelty flows easily from social media to school classrooms and back again, especially in schools that allow cellphone use during the day.



Continued on Page 6

Bullying Cases Cost Schools Millions (Continued)

The Response

Experts say school efforts to tamp bullying are still ad hoc. Funding is often a challenge, but it doesn't change the fact that districts and charters have a responsibility to anticipate foreseeable dangers that children might face. Programs that show success with traditional bullying should be combined with new resources about cyberbullying (**see a list of resources on page 5**).

At a minimum, experts say all reports of bullying should be thoroughly documented, addressed promptly, and punished appropriately. Suicide prevention efforts are also critical, especially as students increasingly report suicidal thoughts and plans.

There is no national data, but attorneys and experts say bullying lawsuits on this issue are definitely on the rise. Bullying lawsuits can be hard to litigate because laws vary widely from state to state. Cases are also filed under federal law, often through Title IX or under constitutional due-process protections. Families seek compensation, but the lawsuits also serve as a measure of accountability by hopefully preventing future incidents.

Legal cases against schools can end with more than a monetary settlement. In Cincinnati, it is now easier to report bullying by clicking a "bully button" on each school's website. During a two-year effort overseen by the court, the school district remade its anti-bullying efforts: training staff, educating students, and establishing protocols for investigating and responding to incidents.


See more about STOPit! Anonymous Reporting system, available now to all NMPSIA Members, below. You can also reach out to POMS & Associates with questions at jgarcia@pomsassoc.com.




STOPit! Anonymous Reporting System

An anonymous reporting system (ARS) can be one of your most effective anti-bullying tools. Thanks to a partnership with NMPSIA and STOPit! Solutions, all members are now eligible for the STOPit! ARS **at no cost**. The program is currently in 29 New Mexico school districts, with another 9 currently onboarding. Since the start of the 2023-2024 school year, more than 20% of all reported incidents on the STOPit! platform have involved bullying.


For more information on the platform, and how it can help you identify and deal with bullying and other critical incidents, reach out to Matthew Toth at mtoth@stopitsolutions.com. You can also learn more on the NMPSIA [website](#).




NMPSIA School Safety Partnership Program


STOPit provides your district with an Anonymous Reporting System and Social & Emotional Learning Resources to help create safer, healthier school communities

NMPSIA is partnering with STOPit Solutions to offer their Anonymous Reporting System (ARS) with expanded incident coverage, Crisis Text Line, and On-Demand SEL & Wellness Training Center to your school district fully funded.




How the Anonymous Reporting System Works:




Step 1:
Observe & Submit

Individual observes an incident or concern and submits it using the STOPit app, website, or telephone hotline



Step 2:
Monitor & Escalate

STOPit 24/7/365 Incident Response Center monitors and escalates life threatening incidents to school officials and law enforcement (as needed)



Step 3:
Manage & Resolve

School officials receive and act upon the incident using the STOPit admin app and/or web-based Incident Management System

How your District Will Benefit

- +** Create safer, healthier school environment and culture for better learning ... and, at an extreme, to save lives
- +** Over time, create "upstanders" versus "bystanders" who take action to help their fellow student, staffer and administrator
- +** Build social and emotional skills as well as reinforce compliance amongst students and staff of relevant, timely issues and concerns

Ergo Corner: Picking the Right Office Chair



Working in an office typically involves spending a great deal of time sitting at an office desk. At an average rate of 40 hours per week, a person can spend almost 1900 hours over the course of a year sitting in a chair. The quality and comfort of an office chair are crucial in work productivity but also contribute to your overall health. Sitting adds stress to the spine and hips, so selecting the right office chair can help to alleviate pain and back tension, and contribute to the overall comfort of the work environment. Ergonomic office chairs ensure proper posture and diminish the stress of prolonged sitting.

Office Chair:

A good ergonomic chair will allow you to adjust each part of the chair independently. If you are looking at getting a new chair-please consider that it has the following adjustable features:

- 1) **Back support:** Ergonomic chairs will offer full back support. In addition, check to see if it has lumbar support that is adjustable to fit in the best position of your back.

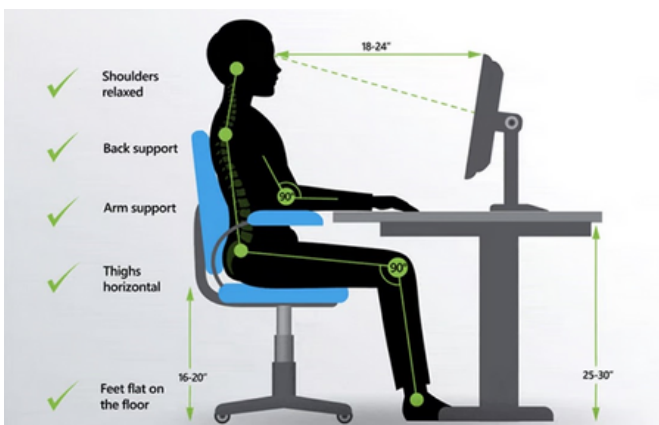


Some chairs do not have adjustable lumbar features so other options are using support type pillows.

TWO WAYS TO USE



- 2) **Chair height:** Ideally you should be able to sit in your chair with your feet flat on the floor with your thighs horizontal and arms even with the height of the desk. If you are not able to achieve that position, you may need to utilize a foot rest to achieve the optimal position.



Ergo Corner: Picking the Right Office Chair (Continued)

- 3) Chair seat: The seat should be the right size for you. The seat should be about 1-2 inches wider than your hips. When seated you should be able to place 2-3 fingers together between the edge of the seat and the back of the knee. This will provide for adequate thigh support.



Measurements

Ensure best achievable sitting position before measuring

Seat height - back of knee to foot rest/floor

Seat depth - back of pelvis to back of knee minus approximately the width of two fingers

Seat width - hip width

Arm rest height - seat to elbow

Seat back height - seat to back of head

Back angle - ship flexion range of movement

Leg rest angle - hamstring muscles length

These are guidelines only as they will be affected by the client's size and shape, and the functions and accessories prescribed

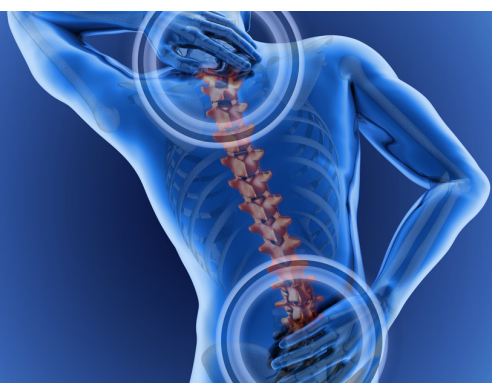


Hold the tape measure between the index and middle finger to achieve a straighter line when measuring seat width and seat depth

- 4) Adjustable arm rests: Ideally you want to be able to adjust the height, width, and angle of the arm rests. That allows you to adjust to fit you in the most neutral postures.

HEIGHT ADJUSTABLE ARM REST TYPES

	STANDARD ARMREST	2D ARMREST	3D ARMREST	4D ARMREST
ARMREST ADJUSTMENTS				
HEIGHT ADJUSTABLE	✓	✓	✓	✓
ROTATABLE	✗	✓	✓	✓
FRONT TO BACK	✗	✗	✓	✓
LEFT TO RIGHT	✗	✗	✗	✓



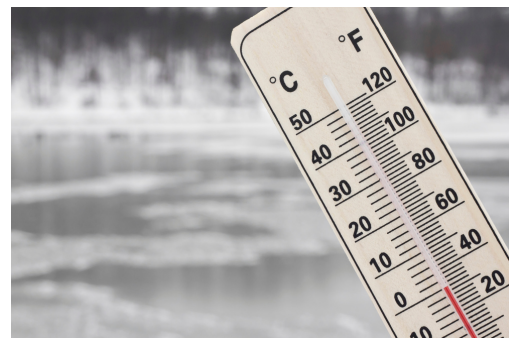
Your Ergonomics Team

Karen Mestas-Harris: kmestas@pomsassoc.com

Erin Brannan: ebrannan@pomsassoc.com

Protecting Your Buildings from the Winter Cold

This may be the most wonderful time of year for many, but the last thing you want is to start the New Year with a significant building catastrophe.



Before you leave for the holiday break, be sure to take some extra time to make sure you are addressing risks and threats from winter weather conditions. One of those risks is a broken pipe from sub-freezing temperatures. If just one pipe bursts while no one is around, the flooding damage to your schools and facilities could be devastating. To reduce the risk, consider taking the following steps:

1. Insulate pipes. Pipe Insulation can help, even if you live in a climate where freezing is uncommon. Exposed pipes are most susceptible to freezing. Remember, the more insulation you use, the better protected your pipes will be.
2. Use heat tape or heat cables. Heat tape or thermostatically controlled heat cables can be used to wrap pipes. Be sure to use products approved by an independent testing organization, such as Underwriters Laboratories Inc., and only for the use intended (exterior or interior). Closely follow all manufacturer's installation and operation instructions.
3. Seal leaks. Locate and thoroughly seal leaks that allow cold air inside. Look for air leaks around electrical wiring, vents and pipes, and use caulk or insulation to keep the cold out.
4. Secure outdoor hoses, valves and faucets. Disconnect all hoses and, if possible, use an indoor valve to shut off and drain water from pipes leading to outside faucets. This reduces the chance of freezing in the short span of pipe just inside the building.
5. Let water drip. A trickle of hot and cold water might be all it takes to keep pipes from freezing. Let warm water drip overnight when temperatures are cold, preferably from a faucet on an outside wall.
6. Adjust the thermostat. Keeping your thermostat set at the same temperature during both day and night also reduces the risk of frozen pipes. During extreme cold, this also helps reduce the strain on the furnace.
7. Open cabinet doors. This allows heat to get to un-insulated pipes under sinks and appliances near exterior walls.

For more tips on winter weather preparedness, we want to re-share this useful checklist with you once again as well. We wish you a happy and peaceful end to 2023 and a prosperous New Year in 2024.



Winter Weather Checklist

Click [here](#) to download a copy.

For additional information or Loss Control assistance, please reach out to Larry Vigil, Senior Risk Services Manager:

lvigil@pomsassoc.com



8 Restroom Cleaning Tips:

Before cleaning, put on personal protective equipment (PPE), including gloves and eye protection, especially when cleaning blood spills and bodily fluids.

- 1) Knock and check for occupants. Temporarily close the restroom by using signage blocking the entrance.
- 2) Use toilet bowl cleaner on the inside of toilet bowls and urinals. Replace urinal cartridges during extensive cleanings.
- 3) Sanitize walls and all stall partitions, including those between urinals.
- 4) Sweep, then mop the floor. Scrub bathroom tiles during extensive cleanings.
- 5) Use an antibacterial disinfectant for toilet seats, sinks, mirrors, and countertops.
- 6) Disinfect door handles and light switches.
- 7) Restock toilet paper, paper towels, and feminine hygiene products, and refill soap dispensers.
- 8) Take out the trash and reline.

Cleaning Tips for Cold and Flu Season

The holiday season is once again poised to arrive with an unwanted gift: the so-called “tripledemic” threat of influenza, respiratory syncytial virus (RSV), and COVID-19.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has predicted that the winter respiratory disease season will likely result in a similar number of hospitalizations as last season when 650,000 were hospitalized with the flu alone.

All this points to the need for facilities professionals to ensure their staff follow proper cleaning procedures to keep their occupants healthy.

Clean and Disinfect High-Touch Areas

Special attention should be paid to cleaning and disinfecting high-touch areas in your facility. The first step is deciding whether to clean a specific area, which involves using water and soap or detergent, or disinfect, which involves using chemicals or disinfectants to kill germs on objects.

Generally, cleaning once a day keeps a facility healthy, while disinfecting is necessary when cleaning may not be enough to clean dirty surfaces or remove all germs.

Decisions on cleaning facilities, and portions thereof, should be based on:

- The number of people: High-traffic areas, like lobbies and break rooms, should be disinfected with chemicals to kill germs.
- Number of touch surfaces: More frequent cleaning should be done of all high-touch areas like door handles, light switches, elevator call buttons, and computer keyboards.
- Whether known sick people have visited: Clean and disinfect all areas, and use gloves and masks if cleaning clothing, towels, and linens.
- General vulnerability of occupants: More frequent cleaning should be done in areas with vulnerable populations, including schools and healthcare facilities.
- Types of materials: Consider carpets, rugs, drapes, towels, and linens.

Remember the Restrooms

Restrooms are known to be major germ zones. According to Health News, scientists found an average of 500,000 bacteria cells per square inch on various restroom surfaces.

As a result, facilities professionals should ensure restrooms are cleaned adequately by using a checklist and paying particular attention to high-touch areas like stall door locks, toilet seats, faucets, and paper towel dispensers.

While restrooms should be cleaned at least once a day, more extensive cleaning, which should be done once a week, should focus on hard-to-reach and overlooked areas. Schedule more frequent cleanings based on restroom volume.

See page 11 for a handy, printable checklist for caring for your kitchen spaces.



Kitchen Safety Checklist

Kitchen upkeep is vital all year long in our schools and facilities. But, it can also be a dangerous business if not done regularly and correctly. We put together a handy checklist, which we hope will help with the process. Just print out the [PDF here](#) and have your employees use it as they care for all kitchen spaces.

SELF-AUDIT SAFETY CHECKLIST FOR SCHOOL KITCHENS



Purpose: This checklist is a guide to help create a safe workplace and reduce the risk of work-related injuries. This is not a complete list, but includes some key items needed to initiate a safety program at your workplace. These guidelines are based on OSHA Standards (29 CFR 1910).

Deli Slicer	Y	N	Correction Required	Date/Initials
A guard covers unused portions of rotary blade.				
A feeding attachment protects hands when feeding the slicer.				
Cut-resistant gloves are used when cleaning deli slicer.				
Blade retracted when slicer is cleaned or not in use.				
A cleaning device with a handle is used for cleaning and repair.				
Workers trained on safe work practices.				
Dough Mixer	Y	N	Correction Required	Date/Initials
Interlocked guard prevents hands from entering bowl with blades are in motion.				
Workers are trained on safe work practices.				
Electrical	Y	N	Correction Required	Date/Initials
Electrical outlets and switches - cover plates installed.				
Receptacles are grounded.				
GFCI receptacles at sinks and wet locations.				
Extension cords are not used for permanent wiring.				
Power cords - electrical grounding pins (3-prong) are intact.				
Power stripes are not piggybacked.				
Emergency Egress	Y	N	Correction Required	Date/Initials
Exit doors are accessible, and not blocked.				
Exit doors are marked.				
The Emergency Action Plan is available.				
Fans for Temporary Cooling	Y	N	Correction Required	Date/Initials
Fan blades guarded by cage; openings less than 1/2 inch.				
Fan cords have 3-prong plug or double insulates.				
Fire Prevention	Y	N	Correction Required	Date/Initials
Items not hung from ceiling or obstructing sprinklers.				
Combustibles kept clear from flames and hot appliances.				
Extension cords NOT used to power appliances.				



IPRA Compliance

As public entities, schools are subject to open records requests on a regular basis. In New Mexico, these requests fall under the Inspection of Public Records Act (NMSA 1978, Chapter 14, Article 2). IPRA requires open access to almost all public records in state and local government, with few exceptions. Under IPRA, the public has the right to take legal action if they are denied access to public records. Improper denials can result in fines of up to \$100 a day, so any mistakes in the process can prove costly for districts and charter schools. The New Mexico Attorney General's Office has the statutory authority to enforce IPRA.

In recent years, open records requests have grown by leaps and bounds. They can be extremely time-consuming, but as previously mentioned, they are costly for schools that don't follow IPRA adequately. Many states, like Delaware, are now considering legislation creating more reasons to deny requests for public records in an effort to alleviate the excessive burden on reporting agencies and abuse of the statute. But, the challenge is weighing the burden with the public's right to know how their tax dollars are being spent.

There's no word if those changes are imminent in New Mexico, but until then, it is important to understand your responsibilities when an IPRA request is made. First, someone must be designated as a records custodian. When an IPRA request is made, the responsibilities of the custodian include:

- The custodian must permit inspection immediately or as soon as practicable but by fifteen (15) calendar days after the records custodian receives the inspection request.
- Suppose inspection is not permitted within three (3) business days. In that case, the person making the request will receive a written response explaining when the records will be available for inspection or when the public body will respond to the request.
- If any of the records sought are not available for public inspection, the person making the request is entitled to a written response from the records custodian explaining the reasons the inspection has been denied. The written denial shall be delivered or mailed within fifteen (15) calendar days after the records custodian received the request for inspection. If the records requested are extensive, the requestor may receive a burdensome letter extending the deadline for the request.

IPRA fines are often the result of not following these guidelines or for improperly denying an IPRA request. The best way to avoid those punishments is to reach out to NMPSIA immediately when you receive a request. We can provide guidance and assistance to help you fulfill all IPRA requirements. In addition, and for more information, please see the link to the Attorney General's IPRA Compliance Guide (**See link at left**).

IPRA Resources

Poms & Associates

Julie Garcia:
jgarcia@pomsassoc.com

[Attorney General's
Compliance Guide](#)

[NM Foundation for
Open Government](#)

Important Contacts

NMPSIA

800-548-3724

Poms & Associates

505-797-1354

CCMSI

800-635-0679

Meyers, Stevens, Toohey Student Accident Insurance

800-827-4695 ext 616

Embark Safety

407-777-2220

Patrick Sandoval NMPSIA Executive Director

Patrick.Sandoval@psia.nm.gov

Claudette Roybal NMPSIA Risk Coord.

Claudette.Roybal@psia.nm.gov

Important 2024 Conferences

January 2024

NMSPA Annual Conference

January 18th-19th

February 2024

NMASBO Winter Conference

February 14th-16th

NMCEL Ed. Rising Conference

February 28th-March 2nd

March 2024

NMASBO Spring Budget Workshop

March 20th-22nd

May 2024

NMSBA School Law Conference

May 30th-31st

July 2024

NM Transportation Academy (Farmington)

July 9th-10th

NMCEL Summer Leadership Conference

July 15th-19th

September 2024

NMASBO Fall Conference

September 11th-13th

October 2024

NMASBO Boot Camp

October 15th-17th

CES/Facility Managers Workshop

TBA

