



# News and Views

## *Winter Warm-Up*

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### ***Winter Freeze Warning Property Damage Prevention Tips***



Winter is approaching and so is the potential for damage due to freezing temperatures. In the past, some of our member districts experienced property losses as a result of frozen or bursting pipes. Special consideration should be made to sites that will be closed and heating turned off during the holidays. North Bay Schools recommends that district maintenance staffs consider the following tips in preparing your sites for winter:

- If you have pipes that are exposed to cold air, make sure they are fitted with proper insulation.
- Cracks or holes in outside walls and foundations near water pipes should be sealed with caulking to keep cold air away from vulnerable pipes.
- Let your faucet drip during cold periods to relieve excessive pressure when the pipes begin to freeze. When both hot and cold lines serve the same spigot, make sure both lines are dripping since both are subject to freezing.
- Open cabinet doors to allow heat to get to un-insulated pipes under sinks and appliances near exterior walls.
- Never try to thaw a pipe with a torch or other open flame.
- Do not use electrical appliances in areas of standing water. Doing so could result in electrocution.
- Monitor and maintain building temperatures at a minimum of 40°F during freeze conditions.
- Winterize sprinkler systems according to the manufacturer's recommendations. Blowing out excess water with a compressor may be the best way to prevent frozen and broken pipes.
- If you have a swamp cooler, disconnect the water source and clear the line.
- Know how to turn off the water supply if a pipe bursts. Quick action can minimize damage.

Taking a few moments to "winterize" your site can reduce the potential for costly damage, along with lost educational time and inconvenience for your staff and students. If you have any questions, please contact the North Bay Schools Prevention Services Department at 707-428-1830 ext 123.

# Prevention Services

## *Winter Playground Safety*

Winter weather conditions can add several hazards to school playgrounds. Identifying such hazards and educating those who supervise children on the playground, including yard monitors, teachers and school administrators can be the key to help prevent certain weather-related playground injuries.

The following are hazards that, although they may exist on the playground at other times during the year, present increased risk during winter.

### Clothing Hazards

Sweatshirts with hoods that have strings, and jackets with stringed hoods or mittens attached with string are likely to be worn by kids during the cold weather. Unfortunately the strings on these items create a significant strangulation hazard if they become entangled in such areas as a gap at the top of a slide, or on an s-hook connector on a swing, among other places. Children wearing jackets or hooded sweatshirts with strings should be discouraged from using play equipment. The Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) recommends that such drawstrings be removed permanently or modified to reduce the risk of death from strangulation.





## **Slip and Fall Hazards**

Wet winter weather brings with it the potential for slip and fall injuries, both on play equipment and the surrounding blacktop and field areas.

Children should be discouraged from using wet playground equipment to avoid the potential of their hands or feet slipping as they manipulate around the equipment. After rain, equipment should remain closed until it has a chance to dry. Early morning dew creates a slip and fall hazard as well, especially when combined with shoes that do not provide adequate traction.

Playground supervisors should keep this in mind and keep kids off equipment as they deem necessary to avoid an injury.

Blacktop and field areas also present greater risk of a slip and fall accident when they are wet, especially field areas such as near baseball backstops that have large dirt areas that become muddy in the rain. Children should be discouraged from playing in these areas if possible, or at least prohibited from running in wet conditions.

## **Surfacing Hazards**

There are several hazards that are brought about by rainy weather that affect protective surfacing in bark box areas. When it rains the protective surfacing has the potential to become packed, which could reduce its effectiveness in the event of a fall. If temperatures drop dramatically the surfacing can freeze, again reducing its effectiveness. Appropriate surfacing heights that are subject to these conditions have the risk of more serious injury in the event an accident occurs. Surfacing should be raked regularly, especially after rain, to keep it loose and at its peak effectiveness.

Puddling in high traffic areas where surfacing has been displaced creates standing water and the potential to harbor bacteria. Areas such as under swings, at slide exits, and other high-traffic areas should be raked/maintained at least weekly to avoid such conditions. Any drainage issues that become apparent after rain should be addressed immediately to prevent future issues.

Playgrounds are a great place for kids to expend their extra energy. When playground supervisors and maintenance staff work together as a team, the playground can be a safe place to do just that, even in winter.



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## ***Holiday Decorating Checklist for Site Administrators***

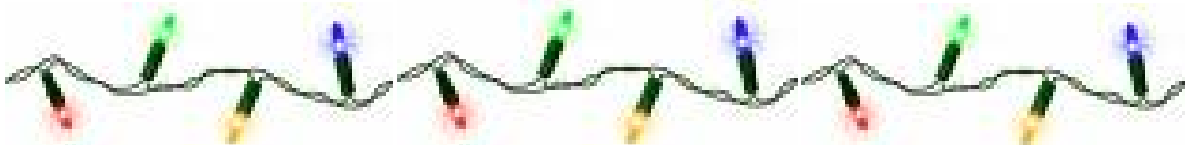
The holiday season is here and many sites will be decorating their classrooms and offices. Unfortunately, each year staff and students have been injured while getting into the holiday spirit. According to the Consumer Product Safety Commission, approximately 12,500 people go to hospital emergency rooms for falls, cuts, shocks, and burns related to holiday decorating. In addition, Christmas trees and candles are involved in countless fires annually.

North Bay Schools would like to take this opportunity to remind site administrators of some tips to help make this a safe holiday season for their students and staff.

### **Use the following safety tips when decorating this year:**

#### **Trees and Decorations:**

- When purchasing an artificial tree, look for the label "Fire Resistant." Although this label does not mean the tree won't catch fire, it does indicate the tree is more resistant to burning.
- When purchasing a live tree, check for freshness. A fresh tree is green, needles are hard to pull from branches and do not break when bent between your fingers. The bottom of a fresh tree is sticky with resin, and when tapped on the ground, the tree should not lose many needles.
- If the tree is being set up in a classroom or office, place it away from the path of traffic and do not block doorways. Because heated rooms dry out live trees rapidly, be sure to keep the stand filled with water.
- When decorating a tree, use only an approved step ladder to place ornaments or lighting on out of reach areas. Do not under any circumstance stand on a chair and be sure to remove high heels.
- Use only non-combustible or flame-resistant materials to trim a tree. Choose tinsel or artificial icicles of plastic or nonleaded metals. Leaded materials are hazardous if ingested by children.
- Take special care to avoid sharp or breakable decorations, or those with small removable parts. Avoid decorations that resemble candy or food that may tempt a student to eat them.
- Do not use artificial snow sprays or other similar products in the classroom. These can cause lung irritation to students and staff.



#### **Lights:**

- Indoors or outside, use only lights that have been tested for safety by a nationally-recognized testing laboratory, such as UL or ETL/ITSNA. Use only newer lights that have thicker wiring and are required to have safety fuses to prevent the wires from overheating.
- Inspect each set of lights, new or old, for broken or cracked sockets, frayed or bare wires, or loose connections. Dispose of damaged sets.

- When utilizing an extension cord, make sure it is rated for intended use.
- Never use electric lights on a metallic tree. The tree can become charged with electricity from faulty lights, and a person touching a branch could be electrocuted.
- Turn off all lights when leaving the classroom or office. In addition to saving energy, the lights could short out and start a fire.

**Candles:**

- DO NOT use candles or other open flame in the classroom or office.



You can help make this another fun and safe holiday season for everyone just by incorporating a little safety into your plans. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact the Prevention Services Department at 707-428-1830 x123.

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***Reduce Holiday Stress***  
*How to relax and enjoy yourself this year...*

Holidays can be exciting – or overwhelming. With all the extra work on top of your normal schedule, it’s easy to get stressed out. But that just spoils the fun. So this year, keep the holiday spirit and...

**Plan Ahead**

You may not be able to eliminate holiday stress completely, but there’s a lot you can do to minimize its impact. For example:

- Make your gift list early, shop and wrap before you get caught up in other holiday activities.
- Schedule parties and visits to allow time to catch your breath.
- Plan holiday menus and parties in advance, and stock up on food.

**Take Care of Yourself**

Too much stress can wear you out or even make you sick. This year don’t let illness or fatigue cause you to miss the fun:

- Get enough sleep and exercise.
- Eat regular, healthy meals.
- Maintain a sense of humor.
- Don’t overdo it. Know your limits.



# Property & Liability



## **WINTER WARNINGS**

Inclement weather and accidents seem to go together. Quick attention to problems presents greater opportunities for prevention.



### **Winter Driving**

Safety-conscious drivers, whether District employees or parents dropping kids off at school, prevent accidents.

Adjust your driving to suit weather conditions. Listen to weather reports to learn about adverse conditions. Driving on wet or slippery surfaces is not the same as driving on dry surfaces. When the weather is bad, slow down and adjust your driving time and habits to the road conditions. It is not uncommon for the roads in our area to develop “black ice,” which can’t be easily seen when the temperatures drop.

### **School Traffic Safety**

Driving slowly in school zones is especially important. Cooperate with school safety patrol persons and observe all posted traffic signs. Be careful when loading and unloading passengers by doing so in designated areas only, as well as by pulling as close to the curb as possible and insisting that all passengers exit and enter at the curb side of the vehicle. Be particularly mindful when backing up. Double-parking, parking in red zones, intersections, driveway entrances and crosswalks are not only dangerous, but illegal.

**Being aware and following these suggestions can help reduce the frequency/severity of holiday/winter-related losses:**

- Review winter driving tips with all school personnel with driving responsibilities. Emphasize the importance of decreasing speed during inclement weather and reduced visibility by allowing extra space between their vehicle and the vehicle in front.
- Remind students that extra caution is needed during inclement weather while waiting at the bus stop, boarding the bus, crossing streets and walking along the sides of streets.



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## **HOLIDAY SAFE DRIVING TIPS:**

The holidays are a time when many people travel long distances to reunite with family and friends. Remember to plan for extra travel time during the holidays and don't rush. Traffic may be heavier and more dangerous than usual. Here are some precautions that can help make sure your holiday season is filled with all the joy we look forward to:



- **Take your time.** It takes three times longer to stop on a wet road than on a dry one. If you lower your speed by just 10% you'll be much safer and it will only take a few minutes longer to reach your destination.
- **Wipers on – lights on.** If you are using your wipers, your visibility is probably impaired. By turning your lights on, other drivers will see you better. When your wipers are on, your headlights must be on as **required by California Law**.
- **Check your car for winter driving.** Be sure to check your wiper blades, lights and signals, tires, battery, brakes and fluids to be sure your car is ready for your winter driving.
- **Carry emergency equipment and supplies.** Carry flares, jumper cables, a good spare and a jack that works. It is also a good idea to carry supplies such as water, blankets, flashlight, matches and even some food.
- **Never drink and drive!** If you have been drinking, always have a designated driver or take a cab. Listen to those around you, if they insist you not drive – **DON'T!** Remember, friends don't let friends drive drunk.
- **Always, always wear your seatbelt!**
- **Make sure your cell phone battery is fully charged.**

***LET'S ALL HAVE A SAFE HOLIDAY SEASON!***



# Workers' Compensation

## *Fraud in the News*

### **Ex-School Employee Sentenced to Jail for Workers' Compensation Fraud**

A former Sacramento City Unified School District employee was sentenced October 10, 2008 to a year in county jail and ordered to pay more than \$200,000 in restitution for making a fraudulent workers' compensation claim.

Sacramento Superior Court Judge Matthew Gary sentenced the school employee after he pleaded no contest to making fraudulent statements. He also had to pay \$121,731.65 in restitution, but that amount was doubled to \$243,463.30 because of an insurance code provision, according to a press release from the District Attorney's Office.

The school employee was injured on the job in March 2002 when a cart rolled over the back of his left heel. In November 2002, he was filmed doing physical activity that he claimed he was unable to perform, such as putting his full weight on his left heel and ankle, going up and down stairs, walking, and operating a vehicle. He later was filmed aerating lawns and performing landscaping tasks that appeared to show that he was operating a business while receiving workers' compensation benefits, the release stated. (*Sacramento Bee*, Oct. 11, 2008)

### **What is a fraudulent claim?**

Fraud is an intentional deception or misrepresentation that someone makes, knowing it is false, that could result in payment to the person making the misrepresentation or to someone else. Making a fraudulent claim is a crime, regardless of whether or not any payment is ever received as a result of the claim.

[Labor Code section 3823](#) requires any insurer, self-insured employer, third-party administrator, workers' compensation administrative law judge, audit unit, attorney, or other person that believes a fraudulent claim has been made by any person or entity providing workers' compensation medical care, to report the apparent fraud to the Administrative Director of the Division of Workers' Compensation.

Workers' compensation claims cost employers significant time and money by diverting resources to the investigation and defense of potentially illegitimate claims. These costs take away funds from schools, which could be better spent in the classrooms.

You may also report fraud immediately by calling **WeTip: 1-800-78-CRIME**

***Your call will remain anonymous***



# North Bay Schools Insurance Authority

## Prevention Services Department

*Presents*

## **New Employee Safety Orientation**

NBSIA is pleased to offer new district employees the chance to learn what safety is all about, what roles they play in site safety, and how they can incorporate safe work practices into their daily routines in order to achieve their goals.

This program, which will take place in NBSIA's conference room three times throughout the school year, communicates the importance of safe work practices and meets district requirements for Cal/OSHA compliance. Through this training partnership, we can reduce the number of injuries to staff and students, limit lost time from work, and improve employee morale.

This PowerPoint presentation and open discussion will cover many safety topics, including general office safety, fire safety, bloodborne pathogens, and ergonomics. Topics of a more technical nature may be addressed depending upon the registered audience.

Scheduled training dates:

**Thursday December 11, 2008, 9 A.M. – 10:30 A.M.**

**Thursday March 12, 2009, 9 A.M. – 10:30 A.M.**

Please contact Prevention Services Coordinator Lateisha Plascencia at (707) 428-1830, extension 123 or [lateishap@nbsia.org](mailto:lateishap@nbsia.org) to enroll your new hires in the course. Please specify the date they will be attending.

NBSIA is conveniently located at:  
380A Chadbourne Road  
Fairfield, CA 94534  
(707) 428-1830  
[www.nbsia.org](http://www.nbsia.org)



# Program Services

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## *Employee Assistance Program*

**Member Matters**  
Helping members balance their health, work and life



### In This Issue:

- [Focus on Anger](#)
- [How to Quit Smoking](#)
- [Improving Working Relationships](#)
- [How Much Life Insurance Do You Need?](#)

Please note: To use Member Matters, you'll need to enter your company access code.  
When you are prompted for the access code type in: **WISE**

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### **WORDS TO LIVE BY...**

*“All of us might wish at times that we lived in a more tranquil world, but we don’t. And if our times are difficult and perplexing, so are they challenging and filled with opportunity.”*

— Robert F. Kennedy (1925-1968)  
U.S. Senator and Attorney General

# CALENDAR OF EVENTS

<u>Date</u>	<u>Event</u>	<u>Location</u>
<b>Nov</b>		
26-28	Thanksgiving Holiday	<b>NBSIA Office Closed</b>
<b>Dec</b>		
10	NBSIA Risk Management Comm. Mtg.	NBSIA Conference Room
11	New Employee Safety Orientation	NBSIA Conference Room
15	Executive Committee Meeting	NBSIA Conference Room
16	Supervisors Academy	NBSIA Conference Room
24-26	Christmas Holiday	<b>NBSIA Office Closed</b>
<b>Jan</b>		
1	New Year's Day	<b>NBSIA Office Closed</b>
13	Supervisors Academy	NBSIA Conference Room
14	NBSIA Risk Management Comm. Mtg.	NBSIA Conference Room
21	CSD "Achieving a Work-Life Balance"	NBSIA Conference Room

## CONTACT US

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Automated Voice Mail:	428-0824 or 428-1830	
WeTip Hotline	1-800-78-CRIME (27463)	
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Gordon Templeton	P/L Claims Manager	Ext. 103
Emily Kephart	Prevention Services Mgr.	Ext. 102
Jeff Wong	Prevention Services Analyst	Ext. 126
Lateisha Plascencia	Prevention Services Coord.	Ext. 123
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Lyn Fortaleza	Accounting Technician	Ext. 115
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Heather Eichen	Administrative Assistant	Ext. 104
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Felecia Lawson	W/C Claims Supervisor	Ext. 124
Deborah DeMuynck	Claims Examiner	Ext. 108
Anna Socarras	Claims Examiner	Ext. 122
Lily Chin	Claims Examiner	Ext. 109
Allison Spirlock	Claims Assistant	Ext. 119
Shirley Steck	Claims Assistant	Ext. 112
Gwen Samuels	Claims Assistant	Ext. 107
Christine Trockey	Return to Work Coordinator	Ext. 121