
School Safety— Your Christian Responsibility

By Clyde R. Raffety

Is your school as safe a place as it should be for your students? Have you done everything possible to assure student safety? Not only should the physical plant and surroundings be safe, but proper loss control guidelines should be established and circulated to all school employees.

Although there are many safety concerns in a school environment, this article will be limited to areas that, in the author's opinion, are the most critical in terms of loss potential. No doubt every teacher and administrator has at some time wondered about the following areas of liability—supervision, child labor laws, and fire safety.

Supervision

This area is probably the teacher's number one concern in relation to student safety. Improper supervision or lack of supervision leads to many serious student accidents each year. It would therefore be well for the school to develop guidelines for proper student supervision in the school program.

Each elementary teacher has the responsibility of supervising his or her students during recess periods. The teacher must enforce adequate play rules, since he or she may be held negligent if an accident occurs. Every school should have written guidelines in this area.

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Students should not be allowed to use defective equipment. All playground equipment should be inspected at least twice yearly for cracks, wear and tear, loose bolts, nuts, clamps, and other safety hazards. If damaged equipment is discovered, it should either be repaired immediately or taken out of use and posted with a warning that it is not to be used until repairs have been made.

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Supervising Shops and Labs

Supervision of students in industrial arts shops, laboratories, and home economics departments constitutes a serious responsibility. Because of the tremendous exposure to potential hazards that exists in these areas of the school, it is very important that the teacher not only be aware of these exposures and know proper safety procedures, but also be able to make the students aware of the dangers.

Students should be adequately instructed in the proper use of equipment before being allowed to use machinery. For instance, before being allowed to use a power saw, the student should be required to take a test relating

to the uses of the equipment and receive at least 95 percent on the test. A similar test should be given for each piece of power equipment, with test results kept on file by the teacher. The teacher should inspect all equipment at regular intervals and keep an accurate record of all inspections and repairs. This information could be very important in the event that an accident results in litigation.

A teacher—especially in a lab situation—should never leave a class or an activity unattended, even for a few minutes. If he or she must leave the classroom, arrangements should be made for another teacher to be present. If an accident does occur, an accurate record should be kept of all actions, medical treatment, et cetera.

Physical Education

Physical-education activities are another critical area requiring supervision. Too often the teacher expects more maturity than the students are capable of displaying. All activities should be tailored to the abilities of the individual student. Accurate records should be kept of each student's competency, and students should not be allowed to move on to a more difficult activity until they have shown sufficient mastery of less-difficult activities.

Physical education should be conducted in an area with sufficient room and clearance to ensure safety. Adequate protective equip-

ment should be provided, and all school-owned and personal equipment should be inspected at regular intervals to ascertain that it is safe, with no loose bolts, nuts, clamps, webbing, et cetera. These inspections and any accidents that occur should be accurately documented.

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Field Trips Utilizing Private Transportation

When private transportation is used for field trips, drivers must be selected with great care. The

school can keep on hand a list of possible drivers whose driving records have been checked and found to be satisfactory. A mature adult should be present in each car, and care should be taken to assure that proper insurance coverage (both type and amount) is in effect for each vehicle. The cars should be in good repair, carrying no more passengers than the automobile's handbook recommends. Students should be required to wear seat belts while the car is in motion. This safety precaution also helps ensure that students are better behaved and less rowdy while riding in the vehicle.

Before leaving on a trip, all drivers should receive complete instructions, including route to be followed, speed, meeting places, and other necessary directions. In fact, it is wise to provide the driv-

ers with a map and the above directions a few days prior to the trip so that they can familiarize themselves with the routes in advance.

Requests for Student Assistance and Errands

Careful consideration should be given before requesting student assistance. Pupils should not be asked to perform a task that is beyond their experience and physical capabilities. Students should not usually be allowed to operate such power tools as saws, buffers, lawn mowers and trimmers, or power cultivating equipment. Most young people are not sufficiently experienced in the use of power tools that they can be allowed to use them without supervision. It is also unwise to request students to move heavy objects, such as pianos

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or stage equipment, or perform assignments that require the use of ladders.

Only responsible students who can be trusted to obey rules should be selected to run errands. Before sending a student on an errand, the teacher should try to foresee any danger or problems that the child might encounter in carrying out the request. Errands should be assigned for educational purposes, not for personal reasons, and should always be restricted to school property.

Child Labor Laws

Some of our academies have discovered the hard way that it pays

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children at risk before they reach kindergarten age.

In view of the differences between boys and girls, developmental guidelines would seem to be a better basis for first-grade admission than age. Such guidelines *are* used in the case of early admission programs.

Self-Esteem and Success

Children need to be in the right grade in order to deal with what is expected of them. Feeling competent and confident contributes to a child's self-esteem—the most important ingredient for success. A second year in first grade gives many children the extra edge they need. For boys like Steven Goodley, it works well.

"I really like school," Steven says. He shows a picture he has drawn of two stylized insects. They have smiling faces and intricately patterned shells.

"My teachers are really nice, and I have a lot of friends."

For this boy, understanding parents and the caring staff of his school have made all the difference. Sums up Judy Whitehouse, "Children today grow up fast enough without being pushed. They need time—time to grow—and time to do what *they* need to do." □

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School Safety

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to become familiar with child labor laws. In several instances, State authorities have learned about possible violations of the child labor laws at our schools and have subsequently inspected the operations and work practices at these academies. Unfortunately, such inspections have often uncovered

violations that resulted in stiff fines.

Most Adventist principals and administrators seem to be aware that there are State and Federal laws restricting the employment of children, but they are generally not sure exactly what the laws require. It would be wise for every administrator to become knowledgeable about the restrictions for different age groups. Following is a list of Federal guidelines:

A worker who is 18 years of age or older may hold any kind of job with no restrictions (other than overtime pay) on number of hours worked or time of day.

● 16- and 17-Year-Olds

There is no limit on the number of hours or the time of day worked by 16- and 17-year-olds; however, they may work only in jobs not declared hazardous by the Secretary of Labor. Hazardous jobs include those involving or connected with explosives and radioactive materials, power-driven wood-working, metal-working, paper converting, and other machinery; power-driven saws and shears; motor vehicles; most power-driven hoisting equipment, including non-automatic elevators, forklifts, and cranes; brick and ceramic manufacturing processes; wrecking, demolition, excavation, and roofing.

● 14- and 15-Year-Olds

Fourteen- and 15-year-olds may be hired only in jobs that do not interfere with their schooling, health, or well-being. This includes office or sales jobs, nonmotorized delivery work, and cleaning and maintenance work. Maintenance work, however, may not include the use of power mowers or cutters, or other power-driven machinery. Fourteen- and 15-year-olds can in *no case* work in an area

where manufacturing or processing operations are taking place. This is an area in which a number of our schools are in violation of Federal child labor laws.

Young people in the 14-to-15 age group are allowed to work only between the hours of 7:00 a.m. and 9:00 p.m. They are allowed to work no more than 40 hours a week or 8 hours a day from June 1 through Labor Day. When school is in session these hours are further restricted from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m., with a three-hour limit on school days, eight hours on non-school days, and a maximum 18-hour week.

● Under 14

Students under 14 years old may work only if their jobs are exempt from child labor standards or are not covered by the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA). Exempt occupations include newspaper delivery, acting jobs, and work in a business owned by a parent (except where that work is in manufacturing or a hazardous occupation).

● Wages

Minimum-wage standards apply to all occupations that fall under FLSA, though an employer may apply for certification under the subminimum wage program. Under this program, an employer can pay workers who are also full-time students at 85 percent of the \$3.35 Federal minimum wage for work in retail stores, agricultural enterprises, some educational institutions, and service establishments. Certification can be obtained from any regional office of the Department of Labor's wage and hour division.

State labor laws apply here also, since in some cases they are more strict than Federal laws. Your State's labor agency can inform you regarding child-labor laws in

your area. For more detailed information, contact any wage and hour division (U.S. Department of Labor in local directories) or the Office of Information and Consumer Affairs, Room C4331, Employment Standards Administration, U.S. Department of Labor, 200 Constitution Ave., Washington, D.C. 20210. Canadian readers can obtain information about local child labor laws by contacting the provincial Ministry of Department of Labor.*

Fire Safety

Between 1978 and 1983 the Seventh-day Adventist denomination experienced fire losses of more than \$6.3 million in North America alone. Of all claims over \$100,000, 46 percent occurred in our elementary schools, academies, and colleges. This 46 percent accounted for 59 percent of the total dollar loss due to fire.

With figures such as these, it is obvious that we have a large potential for loss in our schools due to fire. More frightening than the loss of buildings or property, however, is the possibility of loss of life at these schools. The potential for fatal fires is very great within our denomination at present, due to the large number of students housed in deteriorating, unsafe dormitories. Having been involved with safety inspections and fire-evacuation surveys of many denominational schools in the past several years, I have seen some very alarming conditions which, if not altered, have the potential for resulting in catastrophe.

Through investigations of recent fires in hotel and supper clubs, much has been learned about building construction, fire, safety,

*Information taken from *You & the Law*, vol. 13, No. 13, copyright 1983. Published biweekly by the Research Institute of America, New York, New York.

and evacuation that could be of benefit to Adventist school personnel. Following are a few of the unsafe conditions that exist in many of our school buildings and dormitories that parallel the above-mentioned fires. Every school administrator, teacher, or other school employee should be prepared to take measures to assure that such hazards are corrected or removed.

Lack of Detection/Warning Devices

In each school building some type of fire-alarm device should be provided. Such devices include automatic smoke detectors, heat

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detectors, sprinkler systems, or manual alarm systems that are tripped by the person who discovers a fire. Warning devices should signal a monitoring agency or the local fire department. An automatically triggered alarm is especially important in dormitories, since it works even while occupants are asleep and eliminates alarms set off by pranksters.

Many of the dormitories and classroom buildings I have inspected do not have any alarm system at all, or if they have one, it has been disconnected or for various other reasons is no longer operational. However, a properly maintained system is probably the *only* means of waking students so they can escape a burning dormitory. Early warning is a key factor in preventing major loss of life in fires, particularly in sleeping areas.

Unenclosed Stairwells

Any building more than one story high should be provided with enclosed stairwells that lead directly from corridors to the outside of the building. Doors leading into stairwells from corridors should be at least 1½-hour rated Class B doors equipped with automatic closers and positive latches, and should never be held open with wedges, bricks, or chairs.†

The purpose of an enclosed stairwell is to provide a means of escape that is free of smoke and other products of combustion. If doors into the stairwell are left open, the area can fill with smoke and prevent safe evacuation. This was a major cause of loss of life in the aforementioned hotel fires—doors to stairwells were left open and stairwells filled with smoke, making escape impossible.

Many of the stairwells in our dormitories, classroom buildings, and work areas are not enclosed. In some instances the framework is present and could easily be enclosed, while in other cases more extensive construction would be necessary in order to enclose the stairs. In most cases, however, it would not be expensive to do so.

Exits

A large majority of our dormitories are not provided with proper exits, especially above and below the first floor. Most dormitories have dead-end corridors that do

†Fire doors may be classified by (1) hourly rating designation, (2) alphabetical letter designation, or (3) a combination of both. The hourly designation indicates the duration of the fire test exposure and is called the "Fire Protection Rating." The alphabetical designation is used to classify the opening for which the fire door is considered suitable. Class B is for openings between areas separated by two-hour firewalls that constitute separate fire zones on one level of a building or in openings in stairwells.

not end in an exit.

Old construction codes allowed a 35-foot dead-end corridor; however, new codes prohibit dead-end corridors altogether. The reason for this change is the crowded conditions often found in dormitories, the varying types of construction, and the fact that during both day

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and night (given the varied class schedules and activities of students), students will be sleeping in the building.

Studies of human behavior in fire situations have shown that people tend to head for the end of a corridor, expecting to find an exit. If for some reason the power

fails, leaving the corridor in darkness, or if the corridor is filled with smoke and the occupants cannot find an exit, they panic and lose their lives.

If your classroom or dormitory buildings have dead-end corridors more than 35 feet long, exits should be provided to eliminate them. In all buildings, exits should be provided so that for any door in a corridor, an exit is accessible in at least two different directions.

Carpeting and Paneling

Any interior finish, such as carpeting, paneling, drapes, wallpaper, or paint, should be of fire-rated material. This includes *every product* applied to walls, ceilings, or floors. Nonfire-retardant materials were a major cause of the large amounts of smoke produced in the M-G-M Grand Hotel and Beverly Hills Supper Club blazes, and also contributed to the rapid spread of both fires.

Many of our schools and dormitories have begun using carpeting on the walls of hallways and

lounges to cut down on noise levels. If carpeting is used in this manner, only Class A-rated carpet should be installed. (The class rating refers to the flame spread and smoke development characteristics of the carpet.) Ordinary carpeting has no rating and should not be used in dormitory or school applications. If parents or constituents provide carpeting for dormitory rooms, they should be required to provide at least a Class B-rated carpet.

Any paneling that is used in dormitories, classrooms, or cafeterias should also be Class A rated. Non-rated paneling can be upgraded by applying a clear, fire-rated coating. This coating is difficult to detect and does not alter the beauty of the wood.

When purchasing materials for interior finishes, the buyer must specify a fire-rated product. Some type of documentation of the fire rating should be provided by the seller, and should be kept on file by the school.

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Electrical Hazards

Wiring and other electrical hazards account for a majority of fires in the United States. Overloaded circuits, improperly maintained electrical service, and violation of electrical codes account for many of these fires.

In some of our schools "temporary" wiring has remained for many years. Electrical circuits should be checked regularly and

replaced if hazardous conditions or materials that do not meet present codes are found. All new electrical work should meet the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) electrical codes and should be done by a qualified electrician.

Fire Drills

In many schools, academies, and colleges that I have visited in the past few years, I have found no records of fire drills either in the dormitories or the classrooms. In some cases there have been no fire drills for two years or longer. Such drills should be conducted monthly, especially in dormitories.

Fire-drill procedures should be posted in each room, with evacuation routes shown on a floor plan of the building. Each floor or designated grouping of students and teachers should have an assigned place outside where they are to assemble for head count. Floor monitors or resident assistants should be the last persons off the floor, after they check to see that each room is vacant. After the building has been cleared, no one should re-enter for any reason. In the event of fire, if a student is missing at head count, firefighters should be notified, since they are the ones equipped to enter a smoke-filled building.

The first thing that the dean (or other person in charge) should do upon hearing the fire alarm is call the fire department. I have found that the majority of deans first look around to see whether there is indeed a fire, or if it is a false alarm. This wastes precious time if a fire is actually burning. After talking with fire departments near our schools, I have found that they would rather make a run to a false alarm than get to the scene of a fire that is out of control because of a lag in notification time. This delay

could result in a tragic loss of lives and property.

All new buildings should meet local building codes, and old buildings should be brought up to code standards if they do not presently meet them. The National Fire Protection Association NFPA 101 *Life Safety Code* should be used as a standard in planning new construction as well as in upgrading old construction.‡

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Although we believe that God is protecting our students, we must not fail to do what we can to provide a safe environment for them. We should never be presumptuous enough to expect that God will do for us what He has given us the knowledge and ability to do for ourselves. We cannot expect God to keep us safe when we are aware of safety violations but are unwilling to make necessary improvements. We should take proper actions to eliminate, as much as possible, the hazards and thus reduce both the risk and our liability in case of accidents. □

‡To obtain a copy, send \$10.50 to The National Fire Protection Association, Publication Sales Division, Battery March Park, Quincy, Massachusetts 02269.

Physical Education

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forehand. Instructional remarks should be concise and timely, with most of the class period devoted to activity.

3. *Use a variety of well-paced, gamelike drills.* Nothing is more

boring to students than to have to repeat monotonous, uninteresting drills that have little relation to actual game situations. Stimulate your students by using creative drill progressions that encourage skill acquisition. At the beginning of each unit, start with simple drills that give everyone a chance to succeed. Once your students have developed some mastery in a skill area, gradually increase the difficulty and variety of the drills, reflecting more gamelike settings. Utilizing this "sugar-coated" approach to practice motivates students to continue refining basic skills and helps them visualize at an early stage the relationship between drill mastery and game performance.

5. *Choreograph your class movements.* Plan the movement and organization of your students in drill and game situations prior to class so that valuable time is not wasted. Keep up the tempo of the class by moving quickly and efficiently from one drill to another. This will help maintain your students' interest and concentration.

6. *Pay attention to safety.* Inspect gym equipment to be sure it is in good working condition. On play areas, remove apparatus that will not be used during the class session. Review spotting techniques for gymnastics instruction. Know how to administer basic first aid and cardiopulmonary resuscitation, and be familiar with emergency procedures in case of an accident.

7. *Accentuate the positive.* Try to say something encouraging to each of your students every day concerning his or her progress in your class. When you make corrections, do so in a gentle tone of voice without condescension. Humiliating, punishing, or embarrassing students because they exhibit a lack of physical prowess