

Employee Safety Information for School Staff Meetings
from the Southeast Washington Workers' Compensation Trust

USE A STEPLADDER INSTEAD

Every year at least one teacher at one of the Trust's member district schools suffers an injury when falling off of a desk or chair. He or she is standing on the desk or chair hanging something from the ceiling or another high location.

Desks and tables in schools are **not** designed to support the weight of an adult, either sitting or standing. Chairs should not be used in lieu of ladders either – chairs may not support an employee's weight and tend to move easily (even those not on wheels!).

Every school has a stepladder, often kept by the custodian, which should be used by staff to access out-of-reach objects or areas. Take the time to get the ladder – it may keep you from being hurt.

A portable ladder is a useful tool for accessing objects and equipment that are out of reach, however, it should be used appropriately:

- Inspect the ladder before using it for loose or broken parts or parts in poor condition. Don't use a ladder that is broken, damaged or bent – throw it away.
- Carry the ladder correctly – parallel to the ground in the closed position, holding the side rail in the middle of the ladder so the load is balanced. Watch where you are going with a long object such as this.
- Read the use instructions affixed to the ladder before use.
- Put the ladder near the work to be performed.
- Ensure that the ladder is stable for use by placing the feet of the ladder on firm, even floor.
- Make sure the stepladder is fully open with the braces between the two sections fully extended and locked.
- Never stand on the top rung of any ladder.
- Climb the ladder carefully. Keep both hands free to hold the ladder while climbing.
- Don't lean over the side of the ladder or reach beyond your arm's normal extension while working on the ladder.
- Store the stepladder in the upright, closed position.

Closely supervise students who use ladders. According to WAC 296-125-060 (8), minors are prohibited from “work performed more than 10 feet above the ground or floor level”.