Safe Use of Step Stools in Schools Meeting Kit



WHAT'S AT STAKE

Step stools aren't exactly the most thrilling topic. You might be thinking, "Seriously? A whole talk about step stools?" But hear me out! These little guys are more important than you might think. We're not just talking about grabbing that box of paperclips from the top shelf; we're talking about preventing some nasty injuries and keeping our school safe for everyone.

Think about it: we use stools all the time in schools. Teachers, caretakers, kitchen staff, and even students sometimes. And sure, they're convenient, but if we're not careful, using them the wrong way can lead to some serious injuries – from falls to fractures. That's why knowing how to use stools safely is so important for everyone in our school community.

WHAT'S THE DANGER

Studies show that a surprising number of workplace fall injuries happen from low heights, like those from step stools. So, what are the specific dangers? Let's break it down:

- Falling: This is the most obvious one. Falling can lead to sprains, strains, fractures, head injuries – you name it. And even a short fall can have serious consequences. These falls can happen if the stool tips over after you overreach and lose your balance, or if you're using the stool on an uneven surface.
- **Stretching Too Far (Overreaching):** Stretching too far while you're on a stool is a recipe for disaster. You could lose your balance and fall, or you could pull a muscle or hurt your back.
- **Wonky Positioning (Incorrect Positioning):** Putting a stool on a surface that isn't stable and level is just asking for trouble. It can make the stool wobble or even tip over.
- **Broken Stools (Damaged Stools):** Using a stool that's damaged – maybe it has loose screws, wobbly legs, or broken steps – is super risky. It could collapse under you!
- **Close Calls (Near Misses):** Even if you don't fall, a close call – like when

you almost lose your balance or the stool wobbles but doesn’t tip – is a big red flag. It’s a sign that something needs to change before someone gets hurt.

So, even though they seem harmless, step stools can be dangerous if we’re not careful.

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

How do we avoid these accidents? Here are some simple things we can all do:

Preventing Falls: It’s All About Balance and a Solid Base

First, let’s focus on preventing those nasty falls. It starts with where you place the stool. It must be on a firm, level surface. Forget rugs, uneven floors, or anything wobbly – you need solid, flat ground. Then, when you’re on the stool, remember the three points of contact rule: two hands and one foot, or two feet and one hand firmly on the stool at all times. This keeps you stable. And resist the urge to overreach! If you can’t reach something comfortably, climb down and move the stool. Finally, never stand on the top step or the pail shelf – they’re not designed for that and are unstable.

Checking Your Stool: A Quick Once-Over Before You Step

Before you even think about climbing, give the stool a quick inspection. Look for loose screws, wobbly legs, cracks, or anything else that looks off. If you see something, don’t use the stool! Report it to maintenance right away. A damaged stool is a major hazard. The school should also have a regular inspection schedule for all their stools.

Using Stools the Right Way

Now for the actual climbing. Remember, step stools are for reaching things that are slightly out of reach, not for serious climbing. So, don’t use them as a substitute for a ladder. Before you step on it, make sure the stool is fully opened and locked. You should hear or feel it click. And when you’re climbing up or down, always face the stool and hold on tight to any handrails.

FINAL WORD

Step stools might seem small and harmless, but they can be dangerous if we don’t use them correctly. By taking these simple precautions, we can prevent accidents and make our school a safer place. Remember, safety first, always!