

Maintaining indoor and outdoor areas in early childhood education and care.

What is the problem?

Workers in the early childhood education and care sector experience musculoskeletal injuries (eg sprains, strains, fractures and soft tissue injuries) when maintaining indoor and outdoor areas.

What are the risks?

Workers may be at risk of injuries from:

- Falling from height when displaying artwork in indoor areas without appropriate aids (eg ladders).
- Tripping and falling due to toys that haven't been packed away.
- Tripping or falling due to poorly maintained or uneven floor surfaces.
- Tripping or falling due to wet floor surfaces.
- Awkward postures due to working at floor level to tidy up.
- Repetitive movements required to clean surfaces.

What are solutions to the problems?

Systems

Develop systems of work that:

- Encourage children to assist in picking up toys.
- Tidy areas frequently so toys do not accumulate on the floor.
- Schedules and records regular inspections and maintenance of all areas of the workplace and all equipment.
- Regularly review equipment. Discard equipment and objects that do not need to be retained or have not been used within a designated timeframe (eg 12 months).
- Provide workers with information, instruction and supervision on documented work procedures and use of equipment and aids.
- Provide reporting processes so safety issues can be identified and fixed as soon as possible.

Equipment

- Use a pulley system so stringlines for displaying artwork can be raised and lowered from ground level.
- Use ladders or step platforms to reach higher objects. For example:
 - select the most appropriate ladder for the task (eg industrial/domestic rating, height, base width)

- step platforms provide a larger, more stable work surface than ladders
- place ladders or step platforms squarely on firm, non-slip surfaces
- maintain three points of contact (eg two feet and at least one hand or two hands, and at least one foot) when ascending, descending or standing on a ladder
- inspect step ladders or step platforms regularly. Repair or replace ladders where rungs, steps, treads or top plates are missing, worn, damaged or loose
- tables, chairs, play equipment or milk crates should not be used to reach higher objects
- stand no higher than the second tread below the top plate of step ladders
- store step platforms or ladders where workers can easily access them when required.
- Provide storage containers that are appropriately sized and shaped, sturdy, lightweight and have wheels/handles, so toys can be packed away easily.

Environment

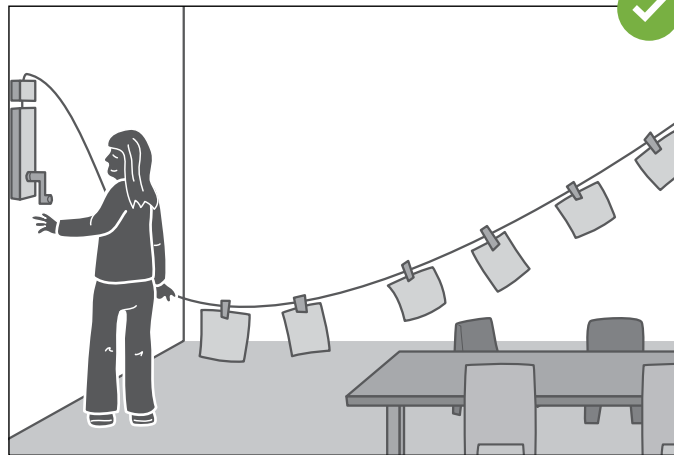
- Maintain floor and ground surfaces. Replace uneven or damaged surfaces that cause people to trip (eg damaged carpets, mats, tiles, linoleum, concrete or impact-absorbing surfaces).
- Regularly maintain outdoor areas to contain materials such as tanbark or sand within designated areas.
- Install additional power points to avoid stretching electrical cords across floors.
- Use a surface colour or texture change to highlight where surfaces suddenly change from hard to soft or where a change in level is difficult to see.
- Immediately clean up spills, regardless of how small the spill is or whether it occurs in a staff-only or child-accessible area.

The problem



Worker is at risk of falling from height when an appropriate aid is not used to reach higher objects.

A solution



A pulley system and stringline can be raised and lowered to display artwork.

Further Information

SafeWork NSW

13 10 50

contact@safework.nsw.gov.au

safework.nsw.gov.au

Related SafeWork NSW Health and Safety Solutions

- [Using cots, highchairs and change tables in early childhood education and care](#)
- [Working at low levels in early childhood education and care](#)
- [Moving equipment in early childhood education and care](#)
- [Storing supplies and equipment in early childhood education and care](#)
- [Using office areas in early childhood education and care](#)

SafeWork NSW Publications

Search the below SafeWork NSW publication titles on safework.nsw.gov.au

- [Hazardous manual tasks, code of practice](#)
- [Manual Tasks](#)
- [Hazardous manual tasks - Overview](#)
- [Slip trip and falls on the same level](#)
- [Falls safety Guide](#)

Related Publications

Search the below SafeWork NSW publication titles on safework.nsw.gov.au

- How to manage work health and safety risks, Code of practice
- Managing the work environment and facilities, code of practice

Australian Standards

AS/NZS 4422:2016, Playground surfacing – specifications, requirements and test method

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