Teaching places many demands on your voice. Talking excessively, or loudly, speaking over background noise, and speaking and projecting your voice over large distances in the playground or on the sports field are just some of the vocal pressures you confront every day. Because of these vocal demands, teachers are at increased risk of developing voice problems. Fortunately, it is not difficult for most teachers to avoid voice problems during their teaching career.

Strategies for maintaining voice quality

**DO**
- Use methods of behaviour management that do not involve yelling or loud talking.
- Stand in a place in the classroom that makes it easier for students to hear you.
- Move closer to students or have them move closer to you when talking to them.

**DO NOT**
- Ignore feelings of throat fatigue, dryness, soreness, or strain - these are danger signals.
- Force yourself to speak by whispering to protect your voice.
- Drink too much coffee as it can cause dehydration and have a negative impact on your vocal cords. Instead, stay hydrated - keep a water bottle with you and drink at least two litres of water each day.

For more information contact your OHS Advisor at your Regional Office or go to the DEECD website:

Voice Care For Teachers

DEECD OHS & WorkCover Website
Electrical Safety
Due to a number of recent electrocutions in regional Victoria, the electricity safety regulator, Energy Safe Victoria advised through the print media a range of simple precautions that should be followed to stay safe around electricity. These include:

- Install safety switches on both the power and lighting circuits in properties, including sheds and garages.
- Do not use damaged electrical equipment or appliances. If in doubt, throw them out and ensure they cannot be recycled.
- Check that extension leads are not damaged with exposed wiring.
- Always wear appropriate clothing & PPE when operating power tools and other electrical equipment.
- Extension leads and power boards are just a short term solution to powering appliances. Arrange for permanent power points to be installed.
- Always use an electrician licensed by Energy Safe Victoria for any electrical work.

Further information regarding electrical safety is available on the DEECD OHS website.

EduSafe Incident Reporting
EduSafe is the Department’s user based Incident Reporting & Hazard Management System that covers all non-student incidents across the Department’s operations.

It allows all Departmental employees to report incidents, injuries and hazards themselves or on the behalf of others if they are unable to. When lodged, the reports go to the employee’s line manager for appropriate action.

It is important that all employee injuries and detected hazards are reported using eduSafe to ensure that effective action can be taken to help prevent further incidents in your workplace.

EduSafe is easy to use and only requires your EduMail username and password to log in.

To log a hazard, incident or injury go to: eduSafe

Microwave Safety in the Workplace
Recently, some schools have been approached by microwave testing and service providers suggesting that it is a requirement to have microwave ovens tested on an annual basis. This is not the case.

Microwave leakage levels in excess of the recommended limits are rare and an oven in good condition and used correctly is safe. Routine testing of microwave oven leakage is not considered necessary, although regular inspections, incorporating the following are recommended:

- The surface of the door is not damaged.
- The door fits squarely and securely and opens and closes smoothly.
- The door hinges are in good condition.
- The oven is clean and in particular the door edges and interior surrounds are not covered with food or burnt material.
- No corrosion is evident on the door, door hinges or the oven interior.
- The electrical cord has a current test and tag.

If an oven appears damaged, it should not be used until a suitably experienced technician has tested the oven and checked that the leakage does not exceed the recommended limit.

Precautions for Radiation Safety in the use of Microwave Ovens

- Always follow the oven manufacturer’s instructions on recommended operating procedures and safety precautions.
- Never tamper with or inactivate the interlocking devices.
- Never use the oven without the trays provided by the manufacturer unless specifically allowed in the manufacturer’s instructions.
- Never operate the oven without a load (i.e., an absorbing material such as food or water) in the oven cavity unless specifically allowed in the manufacturer’s instructions.
- Never rest heavy objects such as food containers on the door while it is open.
- Clean the oven cavity, the door and seals with water and a mild detergent at regular intervals (do not use abrasive cleaning pads).
- Supervise students using microwave ovens

Further Information
Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency (ARPANSA)
ARPANSA Microwave Factsheet
AS/NZS60335.2.25:2002
ComCare Virtual Office

Safe Use of Notebooks
Notebook computers are intended for short-term mobile use. Due to their portable nature notebooks are often used in a variety of locations that are not suited to extended usage such as the kitchen table or your lap.

The same basic ergonomic principles that apply to desk top computers must be applied to notebook computers to reduce the risk of musculoskeletal injuries. If you use a notebook as your primary computer or for extended periods, you must ensure it is set up correctly to allow you to adopt the appropriate ergonomic posture. This can be achieved by:

- Using a docking station to connect to existing computer equipment, such as a screen, keyboard and mouse at an adjustable workstation.
- Transferring information from the notebook to the desktop computer for more extensive periods of work.
- Becoming aware of the posture when using the notebook and frequently rotating between keying and other activities of work.
- Becoming keyboard literate to avoid periods of time looking down at the keys, which can contribute to neck discomfort.

Further information can be obtained from the DEECD OHS Website, under OHS Hazards - Ergonomics, including a Workstation Ergonomic Risk Assessment Form.
Audit of Plant & Equipment in Technology

In March this year DEECD commenced a new project focussing on the safety of all powered plant and equipment located in wood, metal and automotive technology areas in secondary and P-12 colleges and specialist schools. The Employee Health Unit (EHU) has contracted external qualified auditors to work with schools to conduct plant compliance audits against applicable standards for design, guarding, extraction, noise and other relevant hazard controls.

The outputs of the audit include the following for each item of plant audited:

- Identification of gaps in safety compliance of audited plant.
- Development of a Plant Register for each school which will document the type, make, quantity and condition of each item of plant.
- A risk assessment and Safe Work Procedure (SWP) for each item of plant.

Recommendations and cost estimates for any required improvements to items of plants and a list of recommended maintenance providers will also be provided to each school audited as part of the project.

This is a critical component of DEECD’s commitment to safety in technology areas in schools. Increased training opportunities for technology teachers and the implementation of a broader OHS management system across DEECD will result in safer environments for both our students and our teachers.

If you would like further information about the project please contact Emma Thompson, Senior OHS Policy Consultant, EHU on 9637 3946 or thompson.emma.t@edumail.vic.gov.au

OHS Consultation and Communication

A central feature in the effective management of health and safety is the quality of OHS consultation and communication that occurs in the workplace. Employees are often best placed to identify health and safety concerns and suggest appropriate risk controls. Effective consultation and communication will assist in building commitment to health and safety across DEECD.

The Victorian OHS Act (2004) requires workplaces to establish appropriate consultative arrangements to enable formal and documented discussions on matters that affect employee health and safety to occur. For relevant OHS discussion in the workplace to occur, it is essential to establish formalised processes which are available to all employees. In this way, OHS hazards, incidents and information can be discussed and agreed solutions actioned in a transparent way.

When determining what type of OHS consultation process to put in place it is important to consider what will be most effective in your workplace. In smaller schools and workplaces, consultation may be as simple as having OHS as a standing agenda item at staff meetings. Larger workplaces and multi campus schools may benefit from the establishment of a Health and Safety Committee. Health and Safety Committees allow for OHS issues that are common across sites to be discussed and a collaborative and consistent approach to resolution to be undertaken.

Establishing a Designated Work Group (DWG) and electing a Health and Safety Representative (HSR) is a key component of OHS workplace consultation. The HSR can represent the views of the DWG in any health and safety related discussions with management.

Have you considered becoming a HSR or getting more involved with safety at your workplace? Now is a great time to do it. If you are interested, why not talk about it with your Workplace Manager. Get involved and be a part of the change process!

Workplaces are also required to establish an issue resolution process after consultation with HSRs and all employees in the workplace. The issue resolution process is intended to facilitate resolution of OHS issues as everyone will know what the process is should an issue arise.

Establishing a dedicated OHS Notice Board in staff rooms or work areas is a simple yet effective way to communicate key OHS information. Use of the school’s intranet or staff newsletter are other means by which OHS information can be communicated to employees.

For further information go to OHS consultation and communication in the DEECD OHSMS.

Occupational Health and Safety Management System (OHSMS) Implementation Update

Has your workplace had an OHSMS implementation visit to establish DEECD’s new safety management system? If the answer to that is “yes” you may have noticed a few changes to your workplace as a result.

You might discover that OHS is now a standing agenda item at your staff meeting or an OHS Notice Board has been established in your staff room or work area. The Workplace Manager or HSR may have become more interested in the kinds of chemicals you have in your science lab or under the sink in the kitchen. Don’t worry - these activities are indications that there are positive things going on in your workplace that will make it a safer place to work.

The OHSMS implementation project currently being conducted by DEECD Regional OHS/WorkCover Advisors and Marsh consultants is a key element of DEECD’s workplaces across Victoria and to date over 580 of these have become involved in the project since it began in June 2009.

Has your workplace had an OHSMS implementation yet? If not, it’s time to get on board to help make all of our workplaces a safer place to be. To book an implementation visit or for further support in implementing the OHSMS in your workplace contact DEECD’s OHS Advisory Services on 1300 074 715 or speak to your Regional OHS/WorkCover Advisor.
A new way of reporting incidents, injuries and hazards

eduSafe

Have you experienced:
• an injury
• accident
• near miss or
• identified a hazard?

Then...log it in eduSafe

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