Niagara Catholic District School Board

Footwear

ADMINISTRATIVE OPERATIONAL PROCEDURES

200 – Human Resources **No 203.8**

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PREAMBLE

The Niagara Catholic District School Board is committed to minimizing the risk of foot injuries and preventing slip, trip, and fall incidents associated with inappropriate or inadequate footwear.

Hazards such as falling or rolling objects, slippery surfaces, sharp materials, chemical exposure, electrical sources, and loss of balance present a potential for serious injury. To meet its obligations under the Occupational Health and Safety Act, the Niagara Catholic District School Board takes all reasonable precautions to eliminate or reduce these risks through engineering and administrative controls. In situations where such controls do not fully mitigate the hazard, appropriate protective footwear is required.

To support this commitment, the Board has developed guidelines for the selection and use of footwear, in alignment with the relevant legislative and Canadian Standards Association (CSA) requirements. These guidelines ensure that employees are equipped with footwear suited to their tasks and working environments, further reducing the potential for preventable injuries.

DEFINITIONS

Appropriate Footwear - Footwear selected based on the nature of the work and associated hazards. Appropriate footwear should be in good condition, provide adequate support and protection, and meet any applicable CSA or Board-specific safety criteria.

CSA Grade 1 Footwear - Protective footwear that meets the Canadian Standards Association (CSA) Z195 standard for toe protection against impacts and sole punctures. CSA Grade 1 footwear typically includes a protective toe cap and puncture-resistant sole and is marked with a green triangle.

Engineering Controls - Physical modifications to tools, equipment, processes, or the work environment that reduce or eliminate exposure to hazards (e.g., anti-slip flooring, guardrails).

Administrative Controls - Policies, procedures, and work practices put in place to minimize risks (e.g., job rotation, training, safe work practices, signage).

Hazard - A situation, condition, or thing that may expose a person to risk of injury or illness, including physical, chemical, biological, ergonomic, or environmental sources.

Inadequate Footwear - Footwear that does not provide sufficient support, grip, or protection for the task or environment. This includes footwear that is worn out, open-toed, high-heeled, or lacking proper tread in environments where such features are necessary for safety.

Lost-Time Injury (LTI) - An injury that results in a worker being unable to perform their regular job duties for a full shift or more.

Slip, Trip, and Fall Hazard - Any condition that increases the risk of losing balance or stability, including wet or icy surfaces, uneven ground, poor lighting, obstructions, or improper use of ladders.

Protective Footwear - Footwear specifically designed to reduce or eliminate injury due to environmental hazards, including impact, compression, puncture, electrical shock, or chemical exposure. This may include CSA-approved safety boots or shoes.

Stiletto Heel - A type of footwear heel characterized by its long, thin, and high design, typically narrowing to a small point at the bottom. Stiletto heels generally measure 3 inches (7.6 cm) or higher, with the base of the heel often less than 0.5 inches (1.3 cm) in diameter. Due to their narrow profile, stiletto heels may pose a higher risk of slips, trips, or damage to flooring and may not be suitable for all workplace environments.

Traction Aids - Removable devices worn over footwear to improve grip and stability on ice, snow, or other slippery surfaces.

Reasonable Precautions - Actions required of an employer under the Occupational Health and Safety Act to protect workers from injury or illness, including the implementation of controls, training, and appropriate PPE (personal protective equipment).

PROCEDURE

Types of Foot Hazards and Injuries

Employees may be exposed to various foot-related hazards in the workplace. These hazards can lead to a range of injuries, including but not limited to:

- Impact injuries: Feet struck by falling or rolling objects, resulting in fractures, crush injuries, bruises, or sprain/strain injuries.
- Contact injuries: Stubbing of exposed toes on hard surfaces or equipment.
- Chemical burns: Exposure to corrosive substances causing skin irritation, chemical burns, or other damage to the feet.
- Electrical shock: Contact with exposed power sources, particularly in wet or conductive environments.
- Thermal burns: Contact with hot liquids, steam, or heated surfaces that may cause burns to the feet.
- Slips, trips, and falls: Injuries resulting from surface hazards such as uneven flooring, spills, poor housekeeping, obstructions, improper use of stools or ladders, or adverse weather conditions (e.g., ice or snow).

Selecting Safe and Appropriate Footwear

Each employee is responsible for selecting footwear that is appropriate to their specific job tasks and work environment. The selection process should include an assessment of potential hazards, including physical, chemical, electrical, and environmental risks.

When selecting footwear, employees must ensure that:

- Footwear is in good condition, structurally sound, and free from significant wear or damage.
- Footwear is appropriate for the tasks being performed, as well as for any environmental conditions, including outdoor terrain and seasonal weather.
- Footwear provides adequate support, protection, and slip resistance based on the specific risk level of the job.

Footwear that is damaged, excessively worn, or lacks adequate coverage or support is not permitted in the workplace. A guideline outlining suitable footwear characteristics for various roles and environments is provided as part of this procedure.

Activities and Environments Requiring Special Consideration

The following activities and workspaces should be evaluated for potential foot hazards and risks related to slips, trips, and falls. Employees working in these areas must ensure they are wearing footwear suitable for the identified risks:

- Outdoor areas such as playgrounds, outdoor learning spaces, and sports fields, where the terrain is uneven or variable.
- Classrooms, especially where students may move unpredictably or where sharp or heavy objects are used.
- Gymnasiums and areas used for physical activity or instruction.
- Specialized classrooms, including science labs, technology shops, and art rooms, where tools, chemicals, or equipment pose additional risks.
- Sporting activities, both instructional and supervisory.
- Wet environments, including areas near sinks, showers, pools, or where spills are common.
- Walkways that may be slippery due to ice, snow, water, sand, or gravel.
- Uneven or sloped surfaces, including exterior walkways, yards, or playgrounds.
- Frequent stair use, especially when carrying materials or assisting students.
- Tasks requiring quick movement or sudden changes in direction, particularly when managing unpredictable student behaviours.
- Frequent lifting and transferring of students, including assisted mobility or personal care tasks.
- Manual handling of equipment or use of mechanical lifting devices.
- Access to elevated areas, including rooftops, catwalks, or above-ceiling spaces.
- Work involving chemical handling or chemical preparation.
- Use of ladders, step stools, or other climbing equipment.

Employees are encouraged to consult their supervisor if they are unsure about the appropriate footwear for their role or work environment.

Niagara Catholic employees are not permitted to:

- Walk around schools or other Niagara Catholic workplaces in bare feet or socks
- Wear open-toed sandals without heel strap, flip-flops, beach shoes, slippers, or similar footwear
- Wear stiletto heels
- Walk outdoors in wet, icy, or snowy conditions without appropriate footwear

Please note: That exceptions to these general safety rules may arise from time to time due to medical reasons or to accommodate injured workers or those with physical challenges. Employee Health & Wellness will review such cases on an individual basis.

FOOTWEAR GUIDELINES

Risk	Location/Activities	Footwear Considerations
Low	Standard classroom environment, office	• Slip resistant (soft) sole • Flat or maximum heel height of 3”/7.6 cm • Lace-up, Velcro or slip-on/loafer-type • Must have a back or a back strap • Open toe is permitted
Moderate	Outdoors – uneven, wet, snow-covered, icy, or changing surfaces	• Slip resistant (soft) sole • Sole with treads for snow • Lace-up, zippered, Velcro or slip-on/loafer type • Closed toe and back or a back strap • Flat or a maximum 1”/2.5 cm heel • Outdoor traction aids
Moderate	Custodial Work – Does not include entering areas or performing work that requires steel toe as per the Industrial Regulations.	• Slip resistant (soft) sole • Sole with treads for snow • Lace-up, zippered or Velcro • Closed toe and closed back
Moderate	Coaching, instructing or observing physical education activities in a gymnasium or outdoors	• Indoors: athletic footwear with non-marking • slip-resistant sole designed for the activity and surface involved • Outdoors: athletic footwear designed for the activity and weather conditions
Moderate	Educational Assistant Work	• Anti-slip soles with treads • Lace-up, Velcro or slip-on/loafer-type • Closed-toe and back • Flat or a maximum 1”/2.5 cm heel
Moderate	Science Labs/Prep Rooms	• Slip resistant (soft) sole • Lace-up, Velcro or slip-on/loafer-type • Closed-toe and back • No perforated or ventilated upper of the shoe, or vents in the soles
Moderate	Technology Classrooms (elementary)	• Anti-slip soles with treads • Lace-up, Velcro or slip-on/loafer-type • Closed-toe and back • Flat or maximum 1”/2.5 cm heel
High	Maintenance, Trucking Work, entering areas that have been identified are requiring steel toe.	• CSA Grade 1 safety shoes or boots
High	Technology Classrooms (secondary)	• CSA Grade 1 safety shoes or boots, or CSA Grade 1 toe caps

ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

All Staff

All Niagara Catholic District School Board staff are responsible for wearing footwear that is appropriate to their assigned duties and work environments, in accordance with this procedure. In doing so, staff shall:

- Select and wear footwear that meets the safety requirements specific to their work tasks and environment.
- Inspect their footwear regularly for signs of wear, damage, or deterioration that may compromise safety (e.g., worn soles, damaged uppers, broken closures).
- Maintain footwear in good condition, ensuring it is clean, structurally sound, and fully functional.
- Refrain from wearing footwear that does not meet the requirements of this procedure. Footwear that is inappropriate, damaged, or unsafe is not permitted in the workplace.
- Immediately report any concerns about the suitability of their footwear or uncertainty regarding compliance to their supervisor.

Supervisors and Principals

Supervisors and Principals are responsible for implementing and enforcing the Board's footwear procedure within their respective schools and departments. They shall:

- Ensure that employees under their supervision are informed of this procedure and understand its requirements.
- Supervise employees' compliance and verify that appropriate footwear is worn for the specific risks and environments encountered.
- Address instances of non-compliance with employees when non compliance is identified.
- Provide guidance and support to employees if they have questions when selecting appropriate footwear for their assigned duties.
- Consult with Human Resources for clarification or additional support in footwear compliance and hazard evaluation.

NIAGARA CATHOLIC TRAINING REQUIREMENTS

Niagara Catholic employees will receive training appropriate to their job duties and/or level of responsibility upon hire and on an annual basis. Training will include hazard awareness, proper footwear selection as per the guidance chat and a review of this procedure.

PROGRAM REVIEW

Human Resources shall review this procedure on a regular basis to ensure effectiveness and legislative compliance.

REFERENCES

- Occupational Health and Safety Act, R.R.O. 1990, Reg. 851 - Industrial Establishments;
- Occupational Health and Safety Act, O. Reg. 213 - Construction Projects;
- CAN/CSA-Z195-14 (R2020) – Protective Footwear
- 'Safe on Science' - Science Teachers' Association of Ontario;
- 'Ontario Physical Education Safety Guidelines' – OPHEA; 'Student Safety in Secondary Technological Education Grades 9 to 12'

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