

Wellness — & — SAFETY NEWSLETTER



VOLUME XXXVII, NO. 1

SCHOOLS INSURANCE
AUTHORITY

SEPT/OCT 2026

September is National Aging Month

BETTER BALANCE MAY SUPPORT A LONGER, SAFER LIFE

Good balance is more than a fitness goal. It is an important part of everyday safety, mobility, and long-term wellness. For school district employees who walk across campuses, supervise students, climb stairs, carry materials, or move between classrooms and workspaces, balance can play a key role in preventing falls and staying active.

A study published online June 21, 2022, by the [British Journal of Sports Medicine](#) found that people in middle and later life who were unable to stand on one leg for 10 seconds had nearly double the usual risk of premature death. Researchers reviewed health information and balance test results from 1,700 adults ages 51 to 75, all of whom were free of walking problems, and followed them for seven years.

After accounting for age, underlying health conditions, weight, and other factors, researchers found that participants who could not complete the 10-second balance test had an 84% higher risk of dying than those who passed the test. While the study showed an association, not a cause-and-effect relationship, balance remains an important wellness and safety indicator. Improving balance can also help reduce the risk of falls, a common cause of injury at work and at home.

(Continued on Page 2)



START THE SCHOOL YEAR WITH FIVE-MINUTE MEETING WELLNESS BREAKS

As the new school year begins, schedules quickly fill with meetings, trainings, emails, and daily responsibilities. One simple way to support employee wellness is by adding short, five-minute wellness activities into meetings.

These quick activities do not require special equipment, extra planning, or a large time commitment. They can be done at the beginning, middle, or end of a meeting to help employees pause, reset, move, connect, and refocus.

Five minute meeting wellness break

Five-minute wellness breaks can help:

- Reduce stress and feelings of overwhelm
- Improve focus and attention
- Encourage movement during busy workdays
- Build connection among teams
- Create a more positive and supportive meeting culture

Simple activities to try include three deep breaths together, a one-word check-in, desk stretches, a gratitude round, a hydration reminder, a posture reset, or a quick moment of recognition for a coworker.

To make these moments successful, start small and keep them simple. Choose one or two activities to rotate, make participation optional, and invite feedback from the group. When leaders participate, it also sends a positive message that employee well-being matters.

(Continued on Page 2)

Balance

(Continued from Page 1)

Try This Simple Balance Test

To try it yourself, stand near a counter, desk, or sturdy chair so you have support if needed. Keep your arms at your sides and place the top of one foot on the opposite calf. Try to hold the position for 10 seconds, then switch sides or watch this short demonstration: [10-Second Single Leg Stand Test](#)

Practice daily and notice your progress. Stop if you feel dizzy, unsteady, or unsafe. People with medical concerns, recent injuries, or a history of falls should check with a healthcare provider before beginning new balance exercises.

A few seconds of practice each day can help build steadiness, confidence, and fall prevention skills. Better balance not only supports healthy aging, but it can also help keep you safer in the workplace and beyond.

E-BIKE SAFETY: KNOW BEFORE YOU RIDE

E-bikes have become a popular way to commute, travel around town, ride around campus and enjoy time outdoors. While they can be convenient and fun, it is important for riders to understand how e-bikes are classified, where they are allowed, and how to ride safely around schools, parking lots, bike paths, and shared roadways.

Key safety reminders:

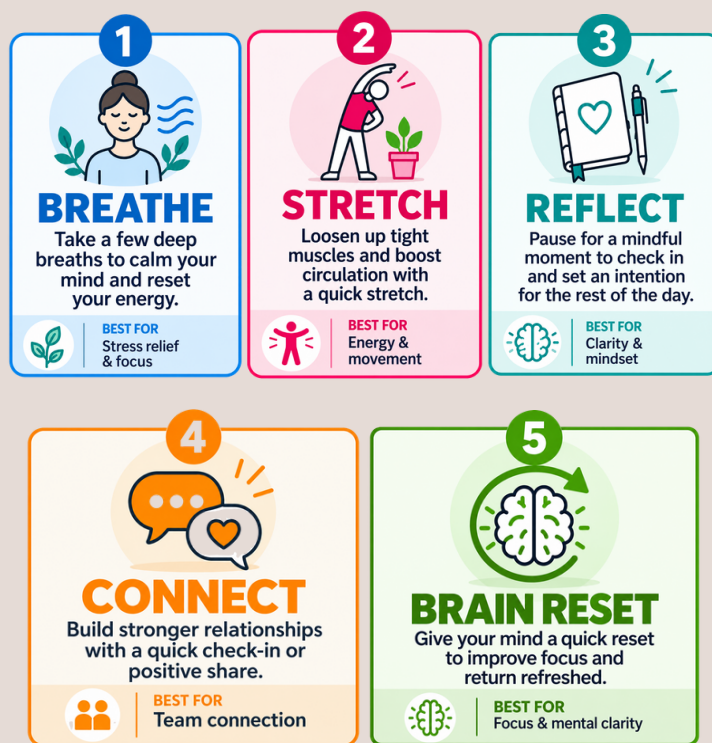
- **Wear a helmet.** A properly fitted helmet is one of the simplest and most important ways to reduce the risk of serious injury.
- **Know your e-bike class.**
 - o **Class 1:** Pedal assist only, up to 20 mph
 - o **Class 2:** Throttle assist, up to 20 mph
 - o **Class 3:** Pedal assist only, up to 28 mph- **must be 16 or older**
- **E-bike vs. E-motorcycle.** If the bike has no pedals or can travel faster than 30 MPH, it is considered a motor-driven cycle or motorcycle and requires registration, insurance, and proper licensing. If operated by an unlicensed minor, the rider could face citations AND the parent could face a misdemeanor (14607 CVC).
- **Know where e-bikes are allowed.** Rules may vary depending on the type of path, trail, or roadway. Some bike paths, trails, or lanes may restrict certain e-bike classes. (Continued on Page 3)

Wellness Breaks

(Continued from Page 1)

Five minutes may not seem like much, but small, consistent moments of wellness can add up over time. As school district employees begin another busy year of supporting students, staff, and school communities, taking a few minutes to reset can help everyone feel more focused, supported, and ready for the work ahead.

Ready to reset? Learn more here [Five-Minute Wellness Activities for Meetings: 20 Ideas to Try](#)



IS MY E-BIKE LEGAL?



E-Bike Safety

(Continued from Page 2)

- **Follow the rules of the road.** E-bike riders should ride in the same direction as traffic, stop at stop signs and red lights, yield to pedestrians, and use bike lanes when available.
- **Ride safely around school campuses.** Slow down near crosswalks, parking lots, bus zones, school entrances, and areas with students, staff, and visitors.
- **Stay visible and alert.** Use lights when riding at dawn, dusk, or in low-light conditions, and avoid distractions such as phones or earbuds.
- **Check your equipment before riding.** Make sure brakes, tires, lights, reflectors, and the battery are in good working condition.

E-bikes can be a great transportation option, but safety comes first. Knowing the rules, wearing the right protective gear, and riding with awareness can help keep employees, students, and the community safe.

Source: Placer County Sheriff's Office

October is Cybersecurity Month

DON'T MAKE IT EASY FOR CYBER CRIMINALS

Gustavo Mastroianni, SIA Chief Information Security Officer

Every October, Cybersecurity Awareness Month reminds us that cybersecurity is something each of us influences through the choices we make every day.

For 2026, the National Cybersecurity Alliance is encouraging people and organizations to “Don’t Make It Easy for Them.” The message is simple: staying safe online does not depend on making one perfect security decision, it depends on building good habits and repeating them consistently.

The Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency, or CISA, is also encouraging organizations to take practical action to strengthen cybersecurity and better protect the customers, communities and essential services that depend on them.

Awareness Is Growing. Secure Habits Must Catch Up.

Cybersecurity awareness has improved, but secure behaviors do not always follow.

The National Cybersecurity Alliance’s Oh Behave! Cybersecurity Attitudes and Behaviors Report: 2021–2025 found that awareness of multifactor authentication increased from 52% in 2021 to 77% in 2025. However, regular MFA use stood at only 53% in 2025



Concerns about cybercrime is also increasing. In 2025, 68% of respondents reported being worried about cybercrime, and phishing accounted for 40% of reported cyber incidents.

Artificial intelligence adds another layer to the challenge. According to the National Cybersecurity Alliance’s 2025 research, 65% of respondents were using AI tools, yet 58% of AI users reported receiving no training about related security or privacy risks.

These findings reinforce an important message: awareness matters, but action is what reduces risk.

Make Good Cybersecurity a Habit

Cybersecurity becomes more manageable when we focus on a few repeatable behaviors:

- Use strong, unique passwords or passphrases. Avoid reusing the same password across multiple accounts. A password manager can make unique credentials easier to maintain.
- Enable multifactor authentication. MFA provides an additional layer of protection if a password is stolen or compromised.
- Keep devices and software updated. Updates often contain important security fixes. Enabling automatic updates can help prevent critical patches from being overlooked.
- Be cautious with unexpected messages. Phishing attacks increasingly use convincing language, impersonation and AI-generated content. Before clicking a link, opening an attachment, transferring money or sharing sensitive information, verify the request through a trusted method.

Simple actions become much more effective when they are part of your routine. (Continued on Page 4)

Cybersecurity

(Continued from Page 3)

Cybersecurity Is a Shared Responsibility

Cybersecurity professionals and IT departments play an essential role, but they cannot protect an organization alone.

Every employee can encounter a suspicious email or text. Every user makes decisions about passwords, updates and sensitive information. Every manager can help create a culture where employees feel comfortable reporting something unusual.

For schools and other public organizations, cybersecurity also helps protect essential services and sensitive information. A single cybersecurity incident can disrupt operations, expose protected data and affect the communities these organizations serve.

One Action Today Can Make a Difference

During Cybersecurity Awareness Month, choose at least one action to improve your security. Turn on MFA. Replace a reused password. Install an overdue update. Learn how to report suspicious emails. Talk with a coworker, friend or family member about recognizing scams.

Then keep those habits going after October ends.

Cybersecurity Awareness Month may last one month, but effective cybersecurity is built through the small decisions we repeat all year long.

Don't make it easy for cybercriminals. Make secure behavior an easier habit.

PLUG IN SAFELY: WHAT TO KNOW ABOUT E-SCOOTER FIRE RISKS

Deborah R. Camacho, M.S., SIA
Prevention Services Coordinator

Electric scooters offer convenient transportation, but improper charging can become a serious fire risk. Damaged, overheated or incorrectly charged lithium-ion batteries and chargers can ignite quickly. The Consumer Product Safety Commission received reports of 156 fires and overheating incidents involving "universal" micromobility chargers, between January 2023 and May 2024.

A few simple precautions can prevent a devastating fire.

Charge Safely:

- Use only the charger supplied with the scooter or approved by its manufacturer.
- Never charge while sleeping or away from home.

(Continued on Page 5)



SPOTLIGHT ON... EGUSD FOOD & NUTRITION SERVICES: SERVING UP SUCCESS



Behind every breakfast and lunch served is a team working hard to keep school kitchens safe, welcoming, and running smoothly. By providing nutritious meals, food and nutrition staff keep students fueled, focused, and ready to learn, grow, and take on the day.

SIA recently had the pleasure of joining Elk Grove Unified School District's Food & Nutrition Services team for their in-service training, organized by Operations Manager Madeline Wainright and her team. The day featured engaging, hands-on sessions focused on injury prevention, handling difficult situations, and food safety practices.

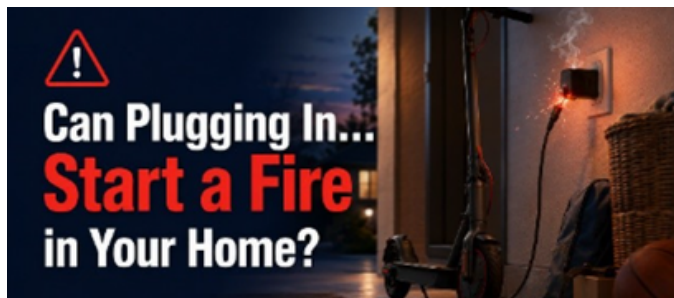
In-service days provide valuable opportunities for employees and supervisors to collaborate, refresh skills, review procedures, and stay aligned on practices that support a safe and healthy workplace. They also highlight the dedication Food & Nutrition Services employees bring to their schools every day.

A heartfelt thank-you to the entire EGUSD Food & Nutrition Services team for the pride, professionalism, and commitment you bring each day. Your work makes a meaningful difference for students and staff across the district and helps support a culture of wellness.

Does your district have an in-service, health, or safety event that you would like SIA to attend? This is a **FREE** benefit to our member districts.

Contact us at PreventionServices@sia-jpa.org





- Unplug the charger when charging is complete.
- Charge on a hard surface—never on carpet or near furniture, curtains or paper.
- Keep scooters away from doorways and exit routes.
- Never use a damaged, wet or modified battery or charger.
- Look for products that are independently safety-certified, such as UL Certified.

See Smoke: GET OUT! If a battery begins smoking or catches fire, leave immediately and call 911. Never touch or attempt to move a hot, smoking or burning battery.

Charge smart and stay alert. Always use the correct charger, never leave an e-scooter charging unattended, and stop charging at the first sign of overheating, damage or smoke. Safe charging habits take only a few extra minutes but can help prevent a dangerous and potentially devastating fire.

Click here for additional resources:

- [Wawanesa Insurance: Overheating Scooter Chargers—A Growing Home Fire Risk](#)
- [Scooter Trendz: Electric Scooter Fire-Safety Guide](#)
- [E-Scooter Insider: Why Electric Scooters Are Catching Fire](#)

KEEPING KIDS ACTIVE — AND SAFE — IN EXTREME WEATHER

Lisa Konarski, Prevention Services Director CPSI, CSRM

Extreme weather can quickly turn an ordinary school day into a safety challenge. From deciding whether it is safe to hold PE outdoors during extreme heat to determining what to do when a thunderstorm develops during recess, school staff need clear guidance they can put into action.

As of July 2026, all school districts in California are required to have extreme weather protocols in place to help determine when weather conditions may pose a risk to student safety, especially during outdoor physical activities. California Education Code §33355 outlines district obligations to implement systems that provide clear criteria for when outdoor activities should be modified or canceled.

Because children often spend more time outdoors, they may have a higher risk of health problems related to extreme weather. At the same time, spending time outside is important to their growth and development. An article from [Harvard Medical School](#) notes that time outdoors can support the immune system, encourage active play and exercise, and help children develop executive function skills such as problem-solving and creativity. Multiple studies also show that recess and PE give students an opportunity to release energy and return to the classroom more focused.

To support safe outdoor activity, staff should work together to create extreme weather plans that meet the needs of their district. What games and activities can you offer safely in moderate heat? When your district protocols require students to remain indoors, what alternatives can you provide to keep them physically active and mentally engaged?

Extreme heat is not the only concern. Poor air quality, thunderstorms, high winds, and extreme cold are other conditions that should be addressed in your district's plans. Preparing for a range of weather conditions can help staff make timely, consistent decisions while giving students as many opportunities as possible to safely enjoy the benefits of being active.

To learn more about extreme weather requirements visit the [California Department of Education's website](#). SIA also offers an [Extreme Weather Plan](#) template and a [Safety Bulletin](#) that summarizes the requirements.



- *California Protocols and Requirements*
- *Spooktacular Fun*

ATTENTION SCHOOL LEADERS: SB 848 – WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT VOLUNTEERS AS MANDATED REPORTERS

Senate Bill 848 expands California's mandated reporter requirements to include school board members and certain school volunteers, who must now complete mandated reporter training.

Which Volunteers Are Covered?

SB 848 defines a covered volunteer as "a person who is over 18 years of age and who interacts with pupils outside of the immediate supervision and control of the pupil's parent or guardian or a school employee."

Although districts may distinguish between volunteer assignments that do and do not meet this definition, SIA recommends providing mandated reporter training to all volunteers. Circumstances can change, and a volunteer who is ordinarily supervised may unexpectedly be asked to accompany or assist a student outside the immediate supervision of a parent, guardian, or school employee.

Training Requirements

Mandated reporter training must be completed within the first six weeks of each school year or, for a volunteer who begins later, within the first six weeks of commencing volunteer service. For SIA members, training for employees, school board members, and volunteers is available through PublicSchoolWORKS (PSW), the learning management system used by district staff for online training courses. Districts should maintain documentation of training completion.



Key Learning and Safety Practices

- Recognize signs of child abuse or neglect.
- Understand the individual duty to report and how to make a report.
- Report suspected abuse or neglect immediately; do not investigate.
- Follow the district's professional boundaries policy.
- Keep interactions with students observable and interruptible.
- Use only district-approved communication methods.
- Follow campus sign-in, identification, and volunteer procedures.
- Know how to raise concerns about inappropriate conduct or other student safety issues.

Building Awareness Across the School Community

One important purpose of SB 848 is to expand awareness and strengthen the network of adults who help safeguard children. When employees, board members, volunteers, and other members of the school community know how to recognize warning signs and report suspected abuse, their collective efforts strengthen student safety.



LITTLE CITY, BIG HALLOWEEN FUN!

Stroll the spooky streets of Safetyville for trick-or-treating, music, dancing, face painting, games, prizes and plenty of Halloween surprises! Don't miss the new SafetyHouse exhibit with a spooky seasonal twist.

Saturday, October 24 | 11 a.m.–5 p.m.

Safetyville USA, 3909 Bradshaw Road, Sacramento

\$7.50 per person | Ages 2 & under FREE

For tickets and more information visit,

<https://safetycenter.org/safetyville-usa/events/> or call 800-825-7262.

Proceeds support Safetyville's children's safety and health education programs.

FREE VIRTUAL TRAININGS TO ENHANCE YOUR LIFE



SIA provides the staff of our member districts with virtual training on a variety of topics that apply to both personal and professional life. All trainings are conducted by Optum, SIA's Employee Assistance Program (EAP). To learn more or register for any of the training courses listed below, click the course title or contact tfranco@sia-jpa.org. You also can join our [email list](#) to learn of future events at SIA – [Schools Insurance Authority \(sia-jpa.org\)](#).

September

9/3	<u>Resilience: Beyond the Basics</u>	5:30-6:30pm
9/7	<u>Connecting Across Generations: Tools for a Respectful Workplace</u>	5:30-6:30pm
9/10	<u>Bias and What We Can Do About It</u>	5:30-6:30pm
9/15	<u>Communication: Beyond the Basics</u>	5:30-6:30pm
9/17	<u>Preventing Burnout</u>	12:00-1:00pm
9/22	<u>How to Build Customer Satisfaction</u>	5:30-6:30pm
9/23	<u>Protecting Your Mental Health in a World of Artificial Intelligence</u>	5:30-6:30pm
9/24	<u>Healthy Habits</u>	5:30-6:30pm
9/28	<u>How to Make the Most of Feedback</u>	5:30-6:30pm
9/29	<u>Understanding Depression</u>	12:00-1:00pm

October

10/1	<u>Understanding Anxiety</u>	5:30-6:30pm
10/7	<u>Doomscrolling</u>	5:30-6:30pm
10/8	<u>Doomscrolling</u>	12:00-1:00pm
10/15	<u>Autism and ADHD in the Workplace</u>	5:30-6:30pm
10/19	<u>Boost Energy Naturally</u>	5:30-6:30pm
10/21	<u>Aging Healthfully</u>	5:30-6:30pm
10/22	<u>Imposter Syndrome</u>	5:30-6:30pm
10/27	<u>Money and Mental Health</u>	5:30-6:30pm

Interested in scheduling a live or in-person webinar for your district?

Click the link to explore Optum's training catalog: [Optum Global Digital Training Catalog](#)

Please note: If your district participates in SIA's Employee Assistance Program (EAP), you can request an in-person or virtual training course for your staff. Contact Teresa Franco at tfranco@sia-jpa.org to make the arrangements. Visit the SIA website at Employee Assistance Program-SIA for the list of participating districts. A 30-day notice is required for all training/webinar requests.



Inhale confidence, exhale doubt.

Wellness & Safety is published by the Schools Insurance Authority, P.O. Box 276710, Sacramento, CA 95827-6710, (916) 364-1281, 1-877-SIA-KIDS. *Parts of this newsletter were created with the assistance of artificial intelligence (AI). All content has been reviewed by a human prior to publication.* The SIA is a joint powers authority, composed of 43 members, that collectively provides workers' compensation, liability, property, and health benefit insurance coverage on behalf of its member districts. The SIA school districts are: Arcohe, Atwater, Buckeye, Camino, Center, Central Sierra ROP, El Dorado Co. Off. Ed., El Dorado High, Elk Grove, Elverta, Folsom-Cordova, Galt Elem., Galt High, Gold Oak, Gold Trail, Hayward, Indian Diggings, Latrobe, Manzanita, Merced City, Modesto City, Mother Lode, Natomas, Natomas Charter, North Bay SIA, Oroville City, Oroville High, Palermo Elementary, Paradise, Pioneer, Placerville, Pollock Pines, Rescue, River Delta, Robla, Sac. City, Sac. Co. Off. Ed., San Juan, Shasta-Trinity SIG, Silver Fork, Twin Rivers, Visions in Education Charter, and Woodland. SIA Officers: Executive Director — Brooks Rice; President — Wendy Frederickson, El Dorado COE; Vice President — Kristen Coates, Elk Grove USD; Secretary — Ryan DiGiulio, Twin Rivers USD. Newsletter: Lyn Poll, Prevention Services; Priscila Gonzales, Prevention Services.

© 2026