



Southwest Washington Workers' Compensation Trust

*From our incident files:  
Safety lessons learned*

## Beware of the chair

School employees are notorious for using chairs, stools and desks to reach high places without thinking about the possibility of injury due to a fall. Yet falls continue to be one of the most frequent causes of school employee injuries. Falling is serious and the results can be severe.

Recent employee incidents include:

- I was standing on a chair. When I went to step down I lost my balance and fell, twisting my ankle.
- I was standing on a stool to reach a top shelf when the stool tipped. The stool fell backward and so did I. My arm was injured when it slammed against a table.
- I was walking across kindergarten classroom desks to hang materials and fell when stepping down from a desk to a chair.

Chairs, stools and desks are NOT designed for standing. It is dangerous to use these pieces of furniture to reach tall items at school, as you would a ladder, and models unsafe practices to students.

When hanging materials is essential, use the proper equipment. Approved ladders or step ladders are designed for, and the safest way to access tall heights. New step ladders are inexpensive, lightweight and easy to store.



- Always use an approved step ladder, never a chair or table
- Check the rated weight capacity of the step ladder before use
- Place the stepstool on a firm surface and be sure it is fully open
- Do not place the step ladder on a desk or other unstable surface
- Face the step ladder when climbing up and down
- Keep your body centered between the side rails
- Move the ladder close to your work instead of leaning over the side
- Encourage your co-workers to work safely
- Help each other maintain a safe workplace

