

Slow Down for September How to Avoid Overbooking Your Schedule

September often marks the unofficial start of the busy season. School is back in session, work deadlines ramp up, and the holidays are just around the corner. If you are not careful, your calendar can quickly become a source of stress rather than support. That is why now is the perfect time to reset your pace, protect your time, and prioritize what matters most.



Why Slowing Down Now Matters

When we overcommit, our wellbeing takes a backseat. Chronic stress, sleep disruption, and burnout can all stem from constantly being “on”. Slowing down does not mean doing nothing it means doing the right things with intention and leaving room to breathe. By setting boundaries early, you can approach the coming months with intention rather than exhaustion.

Simple Ways to Set the Pace

- **Do a Calendar Audit:** Look at your next 2-3 months. Which commitments are essential? Where can you build in white space for rest or spontaneous joy?
- **Protect Your Priorities:** Choose 1-2 core values or goals to guide your time. Whether it is family dinners, a fitness routine, or mental health breaks – block those in first.

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Managing Liability During Back-to-School Events



Back-to-school events create excitement, but they also create risk. Managing liability during back-to-school events starts with a little planning before the first open house or pep rally. Schools host several events within a short window each fall, and each one brings its own exposures. A proactive approach helps administrators protect students, staff, and the district while still building school spirit.

Start With Facility Use Agreements

Outside groups often use school facilities during back-to-school season, including booster clubs, sports leagues, and community organizations. Clear facility use agreements protect your district from unexpected claims. Each agreement should require general liability coverage and name the district as an additional insured. Additionally, agreements should clearly define approved activities, locations, and time frames so there's no confusion if an incident occurs.

Manage Crowds and Event Flow

Open houses, meet-the-teacher nights, and kickoff games often bring large crowds into tight spaces. Parking lots fill quickly, and hallways can become congested fast. Assigning staff to direct traffic and posting clear signage at key decision points reduces trip-and-fall risk significantly. It also helps to set realistic capacity limits for indoor spaces, since overcrowded rooms increase the likelihood of injury.

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- **Practice the Power of “No”:** Declining an invitation now can be an act of self-care. Try responses like, “Thanks for thinking of me, but I am keeping things light this season.”
- **Build Buffer Time:** Avoid stacking meetings, events, or travel plans. Leave time to transition, reflect, and recharge.
- **Embrace Mini Moments of Stillness:** Even 5-10 minutes of quiet in your day can help you reset. Try a short walk, deep breathing, or simply sitting with your thoughts.
- **Be Okay with Imperfection:** Your house does not have to be spotless and your holiday plans do not need to be Pinterest-worthy. Let go of “should” and focus on what actually brings your joy.

By Slowing down in September, you are not falling behind – you are getting ahead. You will enter the holiday season feeling more balanced, energized, and present.

Four Critical Injury Prevention Strategies for Preventing Kitchen Injuries



1. Stop the Cuts: Sharp knives, slicers, food processors, and mandolins create constant laceration risks in busy kitchens preparing meals for hundreds or thousands of students and staff daily.

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Verify Vendor and Contractor Coverage

Food trucks, photographers, and entertainment vendors are common additions to back-to-school events, and each one introduces new liability exposure.

Request certificates of insurance before the event and confirm that coverage limits and additional insured status meet your district’s requirements.

Written contracts rather than verbal agreements clarify responsibilities and protect your district if something goes wrong.

Prepare for Weather and Outdoor Risks

Many back-to-school events take place outdoors, and August heat remains a real concern for student and staff safety. Having an indoor backup plan and monitoring forecasts throughout event week helps you respond quickly if conditions change. The [CDC](#)’s guidance on extreme heat offers practical prevention tips that apply well to large outdoor gatherings.

Train Staff on Emergency Procedures

Every event should include a quick briefing on evacuation routes, medical emergency steps, and severe weather protocols. Staff should also know where Automatic External Defibrillators (AEDs) are located and confirm they are current and ready for use before each event. This preparation takes only a few minutes, but it can make a significant difference if something happens.

Document Everything

Thorough documentation protects your district if a claim arises later. Take photos of event setups, keep vendor certificates on file, and log any incidents immediately with witness names and contact information. Good records make claims investigations faster and far more accurate.



(Four Critical Injury Prevention Strategies for Preventing Kitchen Injuries – continued)

- ✓ Install and enforce protective guards on all slicers
- ✓ Keep knives properly sharpened (dull blades slip and require more pressure)
- ✓ Provide cut-resistant gloves for high-risk tasks
- ✓ Never store knives loose in drawers

2. Prevent Burns: Educational kitchens with high-volume production create multiple burn hazards—industrial ovens, steam kettles, fryers, and hot holding equipment all operate at temperatures capable of causing serious injury.

- ✓ Turn all pot handles away from edges and walkways
- ✓ Never leave fryers unattended during operation
- ✓ Install splash guards near fryers and steamers

3. Address the Floor Hazard: Wet floors from spills, grease accumulation, frequent cleaning, and the inherent nature of food preparation create persistent slip hazards in school kitchens.

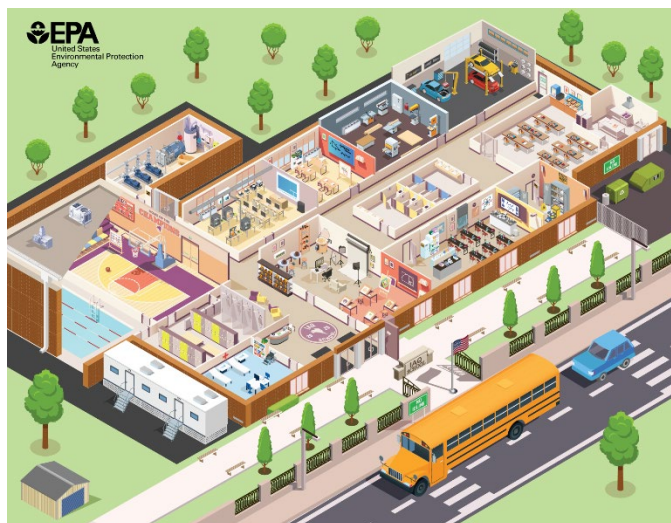
- ✓ Require slip-resistant footwear—no exceptions
- ✓ Implement immediate spill cleanup with visible signage
- ✓ Install commercial-grade slip-resistant flooring
- ✓ Keep walkways clear and well-lit

4. Reduce Strain Injuries: Educational kitchens require repetitive movements, heavy lifting, and prolonged standing—all risk factors for musculoskeletal injuries that can lead to chronic conditions and extended time away from work.

- ✓ Enforce two-person lifts for items over 25 pounds
- ✓ Store frequently used items at waist height
- ✓ Provide rolling carts and hand trucks
- ✓ Schedule regular breaks during long shifts

**The material in this newsletter should be part of your Injury & Illness Prevention Plan (IIPP).*

EPA's School Indoor Air Quality (IAQ)



As teachers ready their classrooms for a new year and students return to school, it is also the perfect time to make sure your school is maintaining a strong [indoor air quality management program](#) to protect student health.

EPA recently published an interactive graphic – pictured above – that highlights common IAQ challenges in schools and offers practical solutions to address them. Take the [school IAQ tour](#) and share this resource with school staff and leadership to help introduce the importance of maintaining healthy indoor air.



EPA updates its Sensible Steps to Healthier School Environments

EPA recently published an update to its [Sensible Steps to Healthier School Environments](#) resource. This guidance addresses many of the most common environmental health concerns found in schools and outlines practical, low- or no-cost measures to help prevent, reduce, and resolve these hazards. The updated resource addresses issues such as:

- IAQ, mold, and asthma triggers.
- Lead in drinking water and lead-based paint.
- Chemical and pesticide management.
- Wildfire smoke and UV exposure.
- Waste reduction, and more!