



Managing Known Hazards

In an ideal world, every hazard would be addressed and corrected immediately upon discovery. Unfortunately, we live in the *real* world, where budgets are limited, resources are stretched thin, and correcting known hazards is an increasingly steep, uphill battle. Some known hazards cannot be corrected in a timely manner, while others, due to their design and inherent nature, cannot be corrected at all. These situations call for the fine art of managing the *known* hazard. Listed below are some techniques to consider:



- **Restrict access as much as possible** – If the hazard cannot be corrected due to lack of funds or simply because of its design, the next best solution is to minimize exposure to it by physically guarding it. Put caution tape or temporary fencing up around the wind-damaged tree. Use both caution tape and a covering to restrict access to the cracked slide. Put a lock around the plug on the defective table saw. These are not permanent solutions of course, just very large Band-Aids that cover up the hazard until it can be repaired. A word of caution when considering this technique: be careful not to create a new hazard while trying to guard against the original hazard, such as using barbed wire to guard access to a broken playground slide.
- **Bring attention to the hazard** – If the hazard cannot be physically guarded, the next best solution is to bring awareness to it. If there is a large crack (or more like a few dozen large cracks) in a sidewalk, put cones and caution tape around them or paint them bright yellow. Even if a repair is scheduled for the following week, bring awareness to the hazard immediately, so people will have a reasonable opportunity and advanced warning to avoid it.
- **Have a written plan of attack** – When all else fails, draft a prioritized plan of action that spells out the who, what, where, and when regarding how the hazard will be corrected, indicating specifically what conditions are required to initiate the plan, or what is currently preventing you from correcting the hazard (i.e., when funds become available, when school is out of session, when weather improves, etc.). This demonstrates that you are not being negligent to the issue.

While correcting a known hazard is always the best answer, using any (or ideally all) of these suggested alternatives is better than doing nothing at all. Manage each hazard as best as possible until it can be corrected, and you will be making lemonade out of your lemons.