



Footwear Guidelines for NSW Government Schools

Work Health and Safety Directorate

The Department, through its WHS Policy, is committed to providing a safe working and learning environment for all employees, others undertaking work, students and visitors, in accordance with statutory and regulatory obligations and corporate objectives.

Footwear is an important safety item. Good soles provide a sound grip on the floor preventing accidents such as slips, trips and falls from occurring. Footwear can also protect feet from damage caused by accidents such as falling objects or chemical spillages.

These guidelines have been developed to assist NSW government schools in providing a safe working and learning environment. Schools which already have risk management controls in place in relation to footwear should refer to these guidelines when reviewing and evaluating those controls.

Areas where safe footwear must be worn

In accordance with the Safe Working Policy, the Department has identified areas of its workplaces where appropriate footwear must be worn by employees, students and visitors to ensure their safety.

Areas where enclosed leather footwear (or other material confirmed by the manufacturer to be suitable, refer to Australian/NZ Standard 2210: *Safety Protective and Occupational Footwear*) is required are:

- Industrial Arts and trades workshop areas
- Science laboratories
- Canteen or Food Technology (kitchen areas)

Sandals, open footwear or high heeled shoes are not permitted in these areas. If students present for a class or activity with inappropriate footwear the student should be offered alternative educational activities until they are wearing appropriate footwear.

The above list is not exhaustive. Appropriate safe footwear may also be identified as a requirement in relation to other areas or activities, documented procedure or a documented risk assessment. For example, in work situations where floors can't always be kept dry or clean, the right footwear is especially important, so a slip resistant shoe may be required. Another example is wearing enclosed leather footwear (or suitable safe

alternative) in agricultural areas/activities.

In addition, other sites on which the Department provides services may have specific requirements which should be adhered to, for example, Education Training Units in Juvenile Justice settings.

Footwear for employees in the general school environment

The Department strongly recommends school employees and other undertaking work consider wearing footwear that is suitable for walking on a number of different surfaces during the working day (e.g. stairs, playgrounds, grass and sports fields).

Footwear which is suitable for the general school environment means enclosed shoes, which are flat shoes or shoes with a minimal heel that have a good grip and fit well.

For some employees, such as general assistants and farm assistants, wearing enclosed leather footwear throughout the working day is important. This is because their responsibilities for ground maintenance and other activities mean that they need footwear that will assist in preventing slips, trips or falls or protect their feet from falling objects.

Implementation of guidelines

School principals, as workplace managers, are responsible for ensuring procedures are in place to maintain a safe work environment in accordance with the **Safe Work Policy** and these guidelines. In accordance with WHS legislation, principals have the authority to determine that employee and students wear shoes that are appropriate to ensure work health and safety for the planned activity. This includes identified school activities (see "Areas where safe footwear must be worn") and excursions.

However, workplace managers should note that it is not appropriate for schools to require students, through the use of a general term "work health and safety" to wear particular shoes as part of a uniform policy.

Principals should communicate the reasons for these decisions to employee and students i.e. that the decision has been made for their safety and the safety of others.