

School Construction NEWS

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Safety Best Practices for Your Campus

By Rob Lopez

School design and construction offers one of the most rewarding environments — those that help young minds prepare for and become inspired by their futures.

Working in safety over the past 20 years and seeing the best and worst of construction safety practices, I have observed several general rules:

- Accidents can be prevented with proper planning and education.
- Empowering your people to be responsible for safety every single day is one of the most effective safety practices.
- Safety training and reviews should begin prior to day one and continue for the duration of the project.
- Every project requires a unique safety plan developed with input from the team.

Safety best practices for working on an occupied campus typically fall into one of five buckets: communication, coordination, logistics, isolation and safety. I've highlighted several guidelines below.

Communication

Prior to construction, host a meeting with building users to make them aware of the overall construction plan and to discuss the communication tools the construction team will use for project updates. Tools may include direct communication, jobsite signage and newsletters. During construction, having a single contact person who can facilitate communication between construction crews and building users is essential.

Coordination

Prior to construction, work with campus facility managers and users to identify what building elements are critical for ongoing operations. Construction crews should minimize impact to those areas. Project managers should also coordinate with facility managers to plan for utility shutdowns and tasks that create noise and vibration, and should provide interruption notices for shutdowns at least 48 hours in advance.

Site Logistics

Construction team leaders need to finalize a comprehensive Site Logistics Plan early in preconstruction. A good plan illustrates delivery routes, site protection, construction offices and other information important to the execution of the project. All crews should be familiarized with the plan.

Isolation

It is critical to isolate construction activities from occupied areas of the building. Crews should implement noise and dust control procedures (including sealing the HVAC system) to prevent contaminant migration and disruptions to building operations.

Safety

For all projects — whether on an occupied campus or not — best practices include having a project Job Hazard Analysis (JHA), task-specific JHA's for critical and high-risk activities, a site-specific safety plan, a site-specific orientation for all team members, regular safety audits and regular all-hands safety meetings.

All projects are unique and require a tailored approach to ensuring jobsite safety. Below, I've highlighted several recent education projects completed by BNBuilders of San Diego as well as some of the key safety practices implemented for each.

Denny Hall

The Denny Hall project is a \$36 million, 90,000-square-foot historic renovation on the University of Washington (UW) Seattle campus. The structure was built in 1895 and is listed in the Washington State Heritage Register. The renovation included upgrading all major building systems, correcting seismic deficiencies, updating the thermal envelope, installing elevators and adding new finishes — all at the center of UW's occupied campus.

"The main bus route through campus went by our site. It was also the main thoroughfare for the Greek system," said Jeremy Jones, Sr., superintendent on the project. "At times, we'd have six or seven busses lined up in front of our work area and thousands of kids walking in front of our site every day."

One safety strategy BNBuilders used to minimize the opportunity for safety incidents, Jones explained, was scheduling deliveries with precision. No deliveries happened during class changes when pedestrian and bus traffic was at a peak. Sometimes deliveries were scheduled as early as 5:30 a.m. The team also arranged just-in-time deliveries so that materials weren't lying around the jobsite. This method increased the number of deliveries required, but it also increased safety.



Photo Credit: Courtesy of BNBuilders

BNBuilders minimized safety incidents on the University of Washington Denny Hall project by scheduling deliveries with precision.

UCLA Geffen Academy

The \$23.8 million Geffen Academy is a new college preparatory school located on the University of California, Los Angeles campus. The new school will offer a world-class education to more than 600 students when it opens in late 2018. Geffen Academy will be located in the existing 75,000-square-foot, three-level Kinross Building. The building is undergoing renovations to accommodate classrooms, an assembly space, administrative offices, indoor athletic space and support space.

For this project, isolation was key in keeping students from entering the jobsite. The project fence



For the University of California Los Angeles Geffen Academy project, isolation was key in keeping students from entering the jobsite.

line was brought closer to the building so pedestrian thoroughfares on sidewalks wouldn't be disrupted. Also, construction crews were strict about not leaving the gate open to allow opportunistic students looking for a shortcut through the jobsite, or distracted students on phones to accidentally wander into the construction zone.

UCSD Blake Hall Dormitory

The renovation at the University of California, San Diego's Blake Hall Dormitory was a \$5.6 million, 28,000-square-foot, LEED Gold-certified project. It included the design and installation of fire and life safety systems, ADA upgrades, interior finishes, bathroom improvements and select hazardous materials abatement. Exterior repairs were also completed to the concrete structure to address spalling and cracking and to make necessary seismic upgrades — all while the building was occupied.

Project leaders noted that their job took on a public relations component. Project managers developed relationships with the Blake Hall director and resident assistants, who in turn informed residents of progress and upcoming construction activities. This outreach to residents and bright, attention-grabbing signage were a critical component in keeping students and construction crews safe.

Safety is an area where we can all grow; we will never "arrive." New technologies, unique projects, and the constant innovation in our field require that we adapt, learn and strive for a safer environment for all. When it comes to safety, I live by the principle that we must constantly try to be the best and continue getting better from there.



Photo Credit: Courtesy of BNBuilders

On the University of California San Diego Blake Hall Dormitory project managers worked with hall staff members, who then informed residents of upcoming construction activities.

Rob Lopez, safety director for BNBuilders of San Diego, has more than 20 years of progressive experience leading organizations towards safety excellence.

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