

New York State School Safety Group 491

Safe Schools Agenda

Route to:

- Superintendent
- School Business Off.
- Athletic Director
- Supt. Bldgs/Grounds
- Site Administrators
- Transportation Dir.
- Lunch Director
- Classroom Teachers

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A monthly service provided to help you with your efforts to make your school safe for students, staff and the public

Why Is Risk Management Important?

Risk is a term that refers to a possible loss or other adverse event that has the potential to interfere with an organization's financial stability or ability to fulfill its mission. In its pure form, "risk" encompasses far more than its customary use in relation to insurance. Risk management is important because organizations can protect their financial stability and their ability to provide services, i.e., educate students, provide transportation, etc., by identifying risks and implementing action plans to address them.

Risk is inherent in most productive activities, and even the best efforts cannot eliminate all risk. However, schools can avoid or reduce the impact of risk on their organizations. Schools are vulnerable to many risks beyond the insurable risks of accidental losses due to property damage, auto accidents, liability and workers' compensation. They also risk losses to revenue stream, tax base, bond rating and actions of other government units to name a few. Thus, "pure" risk management takes a broad view of insurable as well as uninsurable risks that the organization might face.

For instance, your district may have enjoyed a steady growth in student enrollment due to new home building for several years. Suddenly, without your knowledge – or anticipation – the town government decides that school taxes are too high, and the best way to rein them in is to adopt more expensive requirements for home contractors. Construction comes to a halt, and there is an unanticipated "hole" in your next revenue budget.

Adopting this broader view of risk management makes it possible for the organization to do a better job of identifying and assessing risks, assigning priorities to them, and then developing short and long range plans for mitigating these risks.

There must also be a broad understanding of the organization's risks and acceptance of responsibility for preventing and controlling losses throughout the organization. It helps to have a person close to the superintendent who has overall responsibility for risk management, but the reality is that that person inevitably has many other responsibilities. Risk awareness must be thoroughly integrated into every level of the organization's culture and operations.

A strong risk management program is based on a policy statement from the Board and enthusiastically promoted by the superintendent. The policy defines risk management as a priority for all employees, establishes a safety committee to identify risks and develop a plan to address them, and requires the participation of all departments.

All school organizations are at risk, regardless of size, or the lack of insurance loss history, or because it has insufficient resources. Successful integration of risk concerns into its culture and operations protects its ability to deliver services.



Check Out the “*Risk Watch*” Program

The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) has developed “*Risk Watch*,” a school-based curriculum that links teachers with community safety experts and parents. *Risk Watch* addresses the number one health risk for children ages 14 and under – unintentional injuries. Each year, unintentional injuries kill more than 6,000 children and permanently disable more than 120,000. Most of these injuries are not random “accidents”. They are predictable and preventable.

The curriculum is divided into five age-appropriate teaching modules (Pre-K/Kindergarten, Grades 1-2, Grades 3-4, Grades 5-6, and Grades 7-8. Each of the modules addresses the following topics: Motor Vehicle Safety, Fire and Burn Prevention, Choking, Suffocation and Strangulation Prevention, Poisoning Prevention, Falls Prevention, Firearm Injury Prevention, Bike and Pedestrian Safety, and Water Safety.

NFPA believes that children can learn to be much safer. *Risk Watch* provides skills and knowledge that children and their families need to create safer homes and communities.

To check out *Risk Watch*, call 1-800-344-3555. Or visit NFPA’s web site at <http://catalog.nfpa.org>.

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NIOSH Pocket Guide for Chemical Hazards

*This latest printed edition contains information on
677 chemicals. See
<http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/html>, go to index and
click on “chemical safety.”*

Want To Reduce Student Absences? Adopt a Hand Hygiene Program.

Clean hands are the single most important factor in preventing the spread of pathogens and antibiotic resistance. CDC estimates that each year nearly 2 million patients in the United States get an infection in hospitals, and about 90,000 of these patients die as a result of their infection. The implications for the spread of disease among school children and staff members are clear.

In hospital settings, there is substantial evidence that hand hygiene reduces the incidence of infections. Healthcare-associated infection rates have been found to be lower when antiseptic hand washing was performed by personnel and went down when adherence to recommended hand hygiene practices improved.

(When I checked in to a major New York City Hospital this summer, I was greeted at the door, and at many other places in the building, with the sign, “Clean Hands Save Lives” accompanied by antiseptic hand wipes.)

Hand washing with soap and water is a sensible strategy for hand hygiene in non-healthcare settings and is recommended by CDC and other experts. Some soap and other detergents also contain an antiseptic agent.

So, as part of your “pure” risk management program, take a look at the risks inherent in unclean hands, and develop a vigorous awareness program on the need for clean hands for staff and students after using the rest room, after sneezing, before eating, etc., and change operations to support them in this effort.

