



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

Dealing with Concussions Sustained by Athletes

Concussions are a type of traumatic brain injury (TBI), caused by a blow or jolt to the head. A TBI can range from mild to severe. According to the Center for Disease Control (CDC), more than 300,000 people sustain sports and recreation TBI's every year.

Coaches, athletic directors and trainers play a key role in helping to prevent concussions, and managing them properly when they happen. To assist them in this important responsibility, the CDC has developed a tool kit titled **Heads Up: Concussion in High School Sports**. The kit contains a video and DVD, a wallet card and clip board sticker for coaches, posters, fact sheets for parents and athletes, and a CD-ROM with downloadable kit materials and additional resources.

We recommend the tool kit as a valuable resource for the athletic staff in their efforts to prevent injury to students and to deal with concussions when they occur. A free copy of the tool kit can be downloaded from web site www.cdc.gov/ncipc/tbi/Coaches_Tool_Kit.htm.

Pesticide Warnings

The July issue of JAMA, the Journal of the American Medical Association includes an article warning of the rising incidence of acute illnesses associated with pesticide exposure at schools. Pesticides continue to be used on many school properties, and some rural schools are exposed to pesticide drifts from neighboring farms.

Coincidentally, the U.S. Environmental Protection

Agency reports that it fined a pesticide aerial operator for allowing pesticide to drift onto an Arizona residence. The owner of the residence alleged that the pesticide drift caused the fish in his pond to die. The EPA determined that the application was made during inappropriate weather conditions, a violation of label instructions. The company had received fines from both the EPA and the Arizona Department of Agriculture for similar violations in the past.

While few schools in most of the country are vulnerable to aerial spraying of neighboring farms, there are other methods of applying pesticides, so it is important that school administrators assess the potential for pesticide drift risk, seek expert advice, and establish a relationship with neighboring landowners.

Returning to the JAMA article, the reported study found that incidence rates for 1998-2002 were 7.4 cases per million children and 27.3 cases per million school employee full time equivalents. *The incidence rates for children increased significantly during this period.* Most illnesses were associated with insecticides (35%), disinfectants (32%), repellents (13%), or herbicides (11%). Sixty-nine per cent of the illnesses were associated with pesticides used at schools and 31% were associated with drift exposure from farmland.

The authors of the study recommend that in order to prevent pesticide-related illnesses in schools, integrated pest management programs should be set up, practices to reduce pesticide drift should be followed, and pesticide spray buffer zones around schools should be established. The JAMA article can be accessed at <http://jama.ama-assn.org/cgi/content/short/294/4/455>.

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How Good Are Your Driving Habits?

The first GMAC national Drivers Test study of 4,900 licensed drivers revealed that millions of Americans lack basic knowledge of rules of the road and safe automobile operation. The study also evaluated everyday driving habits, revealing dangerous driving behaviors.

According to the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS), a non-profit research organization funded by auto insurers, areas where respondents to the study showed lack of knowledge or a propensity for unsafe practices are also common causes of auto accidents.

It has been a long time since my wife and I took our state's Department of Motor Vehicle (DMV) driver exam. One result is that we have a long lived disagreement about who has the right of way at a 4-way stop. Is it clockwise or counter-clockwise? We are a good example of an accident waiting to happen.

The survey asked 20 standard written driving test questions (taken from state driving tests.) The second section asked 20 behavioral and situational driving scenarios and insurance related questions. Some of the key findings:

- One in ten drivers on the road today failed to demonstrate adequate knowledge of the rules of the roads. If tested today, they would fail a test similar to one required to get a driver's license.
- Rhode Island and the northeast have the least knowledgeable drivers.
- Younger drivers (18-24 years of age) are most likely to fail a written drivers test.
- At least 20% of drivers do not know that a pedestrian has the right of way at a marked or unmarked crosswalk (According to IIHS

research shows that 43% of all pedestrian injuries and 22% of fatal injuries to pedestrians occur in collisions with motor vehicles at intersections.)

- The nation's least knowledgeable drivers (the northeast) are the most likely to speed.
- Younger drivers are most likely to speed.
- One-third of drivers who drink admit that they would drink and drive even if they suspected they were over the legal limit.
- Half of all Americans do not know how to merge into heavy traffic.
- Sixty per cent change lanes on a highway without using their blinker.

The study is a terrific resource for your next safety meeting, both to raise awareness of the need for defensive driving, and as an aid in helping staff to review their driving habits as well as the rules of the road. See http://www.gmacinsurance.com/Press?NDTExecutiveSummary_052305.asp. And <http://www.insurancejournal.com/news/national/2005/05/26/55472.htm>.

You can also take the survey at the GMAC site. Good way to begin the safety meeting. You might also obtain copies of your state DMV driving rules for all staff members.