

New York State School Safety Group 491

Safe Schools Agenda

____ 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

Alert: EPA Inspecting Schools for Safe Management of Asbestos

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) reports that it has settled ten cases with school districts in Pennsylvania, Maryland, Virginia and the District of Columbia that allegedly violated provisions of the Asbestos Hazard Emergency Response Act (AHERA).

AHERA requires schools to develop a management plan for asbestos-containing materials such as insulation, wall paneling and floor tiles, specifying safeguards to prevent the release of asbestos fibers. Schools must also notify parent, teacher, and employee organizations about the availability of the asbestos management plan, to survey asbestos-containing materials, conduct twice-yearly surveillance and tri-annual inspections of these materials, and train personnel on AHERA compliance.

The message is that AHERA inspection and compliance enforcement is alive. All of the districts cited expended considerable resources in order to come into compliance, and to avoid fines. Check your Plan. See http://www.epa.gov/asbestos/pubs/asbestos_in_schools.html.

New Lab Safety Guide Available

Be sure to check out and download the new *School Chemistry Laboratory Safety Guide* at www.cpsc.gov. This is an update of an earlier safety guide *School Science Laboratories: A Guide to Some Hazardous Substances* which addresses changes in the curricula. The guide includes

information about ordering, using, storing and maintaining chemicals, chemical waste, safety and emergency equipment, assessing chemical hazards, and common safety symbols and signs. It also covers Material Safety Data Sheets, Chemical Hygiene Plans and creating a safe learning environment. Checklists are provided for teachers and students.

Budget Alert: Treat CCA Treated Playground Equipment

Section 37-109 of the New York State Environmental Protection Law took effect March 15, 2003; prohibiting the construction of new public playgrounds using chromated copper arsenate (CCA) treated lumber. The law applies to public schools, BOCES, and public authorities. Nonpublic schools are not covered under this law but they will be well advised to follow the provisions of the law in order to avoid the possibility of a liability claim.

The law also addresses maintenance of existing CCA-treated playgrounds. Owners are directed to maintain and operate structures in a manner to minimize CCA from leaching from the structure. EPA studies suggest that applying certain penetrating coatings (e.g., oil-based, semi-transparent stains) once per year or every other year depending upon wear and weathering may reduce the migration of the wood preservative chemicals. Non-penetrating stains are not recommended.

The law also requires maintenance of ground covers in such a way as to minimize exposure to potential CCA contamination. For advice, see www.epa.gov/pesticides/citizens/cca_qa.htm.

Visit our Website at www.nysgroup491.com

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Program Administrator: Professional Underwriters, 1-800-833-8822

Tips for Working in Cold Weather

Winter weather can bring on serious health problems, especially if we are negligent in taking steps to stay healthy. Some tips:

- * Before exiting your nice warm home or workplace, take stock of the conditions outside as well as the weather report for the day.
- * Wear proper clothing for cold, wet and windy conditions, including layers that can be adjusted to changing conditions.
- * Learn the signs and symptoms of cold-induced illnesses. Danger signs include uncontrolled shivering, slurred speech, clumsy movements, fatigue and confused behavior.
- * When working in extreme weather conditions or conducting repetitive activities such as snow plowing, take frequent short breaks in warm dry shelters to allow your body to warm up.
- * Schedule work for the warmest part of the day.
- * Avoid exhaustion or fatigue - you need your energy just to keep warm.
- * Work with a buddy whenever possible and be sensitive to your buddy's danger signs.
- * Drink warm, sweet beverages (sugar water, sports-type drinks) and avoid drinks with caffeine (coffee, tea, sodas or hot chocolate) and alcohol.
- * Be aware that you face increased risks when you are taking certain medications, if you are in poor physical condition, or suffer from illnesses such as diabetes, hypertension or cardiovascular disease.

- * Eat warm, high-calorie foods such as hot pasta dishes.
- * Free copies of OSHA's Cold Stress Card are available at www.osha.gov, or call 1-800-321-OSHA.

NTSB: Restrict Cell Phone Use by Bus Drivers

The National Transportation Safety Board is recommending that all bus drivers be banned from using cell phones while driving except in emergencies. A 2004 bus wreck in Virginia occurred when a 12-foot high bus struck a bridge with a clearance of 10 feet, 2 inches, resulting in 11 injuries.

When NTSB investigated the accident, it found that although signs warned of the low clearance in the right lane, the driver said he had not seen them as he talked on a hands-free cell phone.

NTSB "concluded that the driver's cognitive distraction resulting from his use of a hands-free cell phone caused the accident. The use of either a hand-held or hands-free cellular telephone while driving can impair the performance of even a commercial driver's license holder, such as the driver in this accident."

NTSB has recommended that all states prohibit commercial driver's license holders from using cell phones while driving these vehicles, except in emergencies. School administrators can expect their state legislatures to be passing laws to put these recommendations into effect.

Safety Group 491 members are advised to adopt Board policies and administrative regulations restricting cell phone use by bus drivers as well as those driving all other district vehicles.

HAPPY NEW YEAR!