

# 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*

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### Tips for Safety Committee Effectiveness

1. Set clear expectations and goals
2. Have an agenda for every meeting
3. Measure & recognize the committee's progress
4. Be proactive. Be passionate about safety and the role of the committee members
5. Encourage communication among committee members
6. Give them time for their duties
7. Assign action items and do a follow-up
8. Prohibit non-safety related issues from being on the Safety Committee agenda
9. Train committee members in techniques for running meetings
10. Train committee members in accident investigation, prevention, OSHA requirements and other standards

### News From NYSIF

The New York State Insurance Fund is making two of its publications available in Spanish. They are: Partners in Safety and A Claims Guide for the Employer. Partners in Safety, or Socios en la Seguridad, includes tips on safety training, accident prevention, materials handling, personal protective equipment and a comprehensive Safety Checklist. A Claims Guide for the Employer, or Guide Solicitudes de Indemnizaci ara el Empleador, contains information on accident reporting, tips for recognizing fraud, forms descriptions, employment of minors and information on disability benefits.

The guides are available through the New York State Library State Documents Section, and by request from NYSIF.

NYSIF has also established the first New York workers' compensation on-line verification of certificates of insurance on its website [www.nysif.com](http://www.nysif.com). This service is intended to reduce fraud involving false certificates. Schools, contractors and others can use the website to verify that certificates of insurance have been issued and that are still in force.

NYSIF policyholders can also create certificates of insurance, report a work related injury, view monthly bills and account summaries and benefit from a return-to-work program. Safety Group insured's should contact the Group Manager for assistance.

NYSIF currently issues workers' compensation policies to approximately 195,000 employers.

### Sleep-Deprived Teens

Only about twenty percent of America's teens are getting the recommended nine hours of sleep each night, according to the National Sleep Foundation (NSF.) NSF conducted a poll of 1,602 adult caregivers and their children last fall.

More than one in four of the children reported that they dozed off in class, and 51% of adolescent drivers reported being on the road while drowsy during the past year.

The poll found that sixth-graders were sleeping an average of 8.4 hours on school nights and 12<sup>th</sup> graders just 6.9 hours. Ninety-seven percent have at least one electronic item in their bedroom.

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## The Hidden Costs of Obese Workers

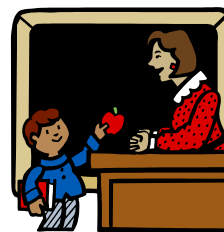
Obesity is costing the private insurer many more billions of dollars today and those costs are being passed on to employers with higher premiums and additional coverage restrictions, according to a study, “The Rising Prevalence of Treated Diseases: Effects on Private Health Insurance Spending”. (K. Thorpe et al in Health Affairs, June 2005.) According to the study, in 2002 obesity cost the insurer \$36 billion compared with \$3.6 billion in 1987. The obese individual costs 56 percent more than the normal weight individual, compared to 2 percent more in 1987.

Obese individuals have significantly higher incidences of asthma, back problems, high blood pressure, diabetes and other diseases. They are also more likely to be absent more and incur a greater chance of injury.

General Motors stated in 2005 that an obese employee cost the company about \$1,500 more in health services annually. Since 26 percent of its active workers and dependents were obese, it was costing the company nearly \$1.4 billion in additional health care costs each year, and costs per individual continue to rise.

The picture of worker health is getting worse, according to corporate wellness expert Tom Gilliam. He finds the change in body mass index (BMI) dramatically changing. In 2000, 30 percent of applicants for jobs were obese. At the end of 2005, 38 percent of new hires in the workplace were obese. He predicts that 45 percent of the incoming work force will be obese by 2010.

Gilliam points out that people ignore their gradual weight gain. Gaining 3 pounds a year beginning in early adulthood results in a person being 60 pounds overweight by middle age.



## What Can You Do About It?

Gilliam and his co-author Jan Neill take the approach in their book “Move it, Lose It, Live Healthy: Achieve a Healthier Workplace One Employee at a Time” that knowledge is power when it comes to taking weight off and keeping it off. They advocate gradual change and suggest that there are things employers and employees can do:

- Be honest with people about excess weight and the illnesses that come with it
- Teach employees the basics of weight loss. The only way is to have a moderate, nutritious diet and exercise regularly. Fad diets, gadgets and other get-thin-quick schemes don't work.
- Get your employees excited about good nutrition. Encourage healthy recipe sharing, sharing of fresh fruits, veggie trays or other low-fat snacks. Remove the junk food from vending machines.
- Foster and encourage exercise groups. (Have participants sign a waiver so you do not incur liability.)
- Link weight loss to larger family issues like what they are doing to enable obesity in their children. Help employees set a good example for their children.

*Organizational weight loss programs are successful only when there is top management support in terms of finance and time, according to Gilliam.*

More than ever before, there is ample justification for employers to foster wellness programs. It is a matter of organizational as well as human costs. You can learn more about Gilliam's work at his web site, [www.healthybodyweight.com](http://www.healthybodyweight.com), as well as a number of other web sites on obesity and wellness.