

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

Reduce the Dangers of Hazardous Exposures

Suddenly, after years of routine operation, the plastic tube connecting the swimming pool treatment chemical to the mixing chamber became disconnected. The chemical continued to dispense, but it dripped into another chemical. A cloud of gas grew. The alarm was sounded and the school building was evacuated. Two conscientious custodians rushed to the scene and tried to reattach the plastic tube. They ended up in the hospital with permanent damage to their lungs. One of my worst memories of the superintendent years.

Staff members are often the “first responders” in school emergencies, but in many cases they are both unaware of the hazards involved and untrained to deal with them. They can also be dismissive of instructions. In another building which had fairly frequent fire alarms from the boiler room, some teachers rushed to the scene despite repeated instructions to concentrate on evacuating the students and not “fighting the fire.”

Most of us are ignorant of the toxic nature of the unknown substances that make up our offices and schools today. They are not just wood and sheetrock. Our office machines are made of plastics that can emit toxic gases when heated. Most of us know little about the nature and location of confined space entries in our buildings, or how frequently they must be entered for routine maintenance.

OSHA’s 10-year study showed that 43% of confined space atmospheric hazard deaths were due to oxygen deficiency. Forty percent of deaths involved maintenance or repair jobs. Twenty five percent of deaths occurred in municipal operations. Rescuers like the individuals cited above made up 60 percent of the fatalities. They reacted based on

an Impulsive desire to be of “immediate help” rather than on a rational and thoughtful plan.

How do we help protect our people from their best intentions and their ignorance of the dangers of confined space entry? By raising awareness, training and frequent reinforcement.

First, it is necessary for the safety officer to understand the potential hazards on site. Becoming familiar with OSHA standards, terms and definitions via 29 CFR 1910:146 at www.osha.gov will provide a basis for establishing policies and procedures for your hazmat program, and for proper labeling of all confined space entries. These should be shared with the entire staff in a way that makes them aware of the locations of hazardous spaces as well as the dangers of entering those areas.

Second, the safety officer and staff members who will seek to be certified to enter confined spaces should attend a “confined space entry class” that combines theory with hands-on-exercises. It should cover the necessary safety equipment and personnel to provide a successful confined space entry.

Practice makes perfect. Training must be reinforced by frequent hands-on refresher training in order to remain viable. Confined space simulators can help staff put their training to the test with actual confined space entry scenarios.

Confined spaces can be dangerous and unforgiving spaces. Unfortunately, periodic entry is necessary. Systematic refreshment of awareness (for the entire staff), training and reinforcement will go a long way to ensuring staff safety, even in emergency situations.

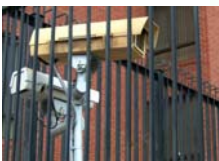
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OSHA: Twenty Ways to Make Your Office More Secure This Season

1. Make well-lit, access-controlled parking available, and suggest a “buddy” system within the parking area.
2. If possible, make security escorts available to and from employee parking.
3. Register all guests and accompany them during their visits.
4. Never leave your reception area unattended.
5. Do not allow entry doors to be propped open if no one is present or nearby.
6. Do not allow unknown service personnel free access to your office space.
7. Report broken doors, windows and locks to building security personnel.
8. Monitor and report suspicious activity in or near your facility.
9. Consider an integrated, monitored security and fire system as well as a remote/IP video system, which allows easy access to facility cameras via the internet.
10. Install an electronic access system, and closely inventory all photo badges, ID cards, etc.
11. If you already have a security system, request regular system inspections and evaluations.
12. Do not open suspicious packages: report them to local authorities.
13. Employ updated computer security software for your entire network.
14. Back up and store sensitive and critical information and databases.
15. Shred or destroy old documents containing sensitive business information.
16. Keep an inventory of your most critical equipment, hardware and software.
17. Develop fire and emergency plans and regularly practice drills.
18. Keep facilities well-lit, inside and out, even during non-business hours.
19. Form a safety team to help keep safety and security issues a major focus of management; staff training; review; and practice scenarios.
20. Encourage everyone to secure valuables at all times in their work areas, including documents that might contain personal or personnel information; and especially during gatherings or breaks.



“SAFETY DOESN’T HAPPEN BY ACCIDENT”

~ Author Unknown

Four Arrested in Workers’ Compensation Fraud

Four downstate workers have been recently arrested and charged with fraud based on separate investigations undertaken by the Workers’ Compensation Board.