

# 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*

### **NYSIF Leads in Fraud Arrests and Recoveries**

The New York State Insurance Fund, the underwriter of Workers' Compensation Insurance for Safety Group 491, has established a sterling reputation for detecting and bringing to prosecution individuals attempting to defraud the Fund. NYSIF took actions that resulted in 148 arrests for fraud in 2006, resulting in restitution, additional premiums and savings of \$17 million. In the previous year, 126 arrests initiated by the Fund surpassed those of all other Workers' Compensation insurers in New York State.

Since 1996, NYSIF's anti-fraud efforts have resulted in the return of \$130 million, affecting the cost of premiums and providing protection for workers who were misrepresented or denied the protection by their employers.

### **Help With GAO Audits**

Last month, we alerted you to the criticisms of school emergency plans by the Government Accountability Office. In particular, GAO found that many of the districts that it had audited "failed to consider the evacuation of individuals with disabilities in their emergency plans."

We recommended that Safety Group 491 members take notice of the GAO analysis in their summer review of local emergency plans.

There is some help available. The National Fire Protection Institute has published guidelines for evacuation of persons with disabilities including an excellent emergency evacuation planning checklist. The materials are available for downloading at no cost. See [www.nfpa.org](http://www.nfpa.org).

### **Alert:**

### **Metal Halide Light Injuries**

The state of Oregon has passed a law banning the use of metal halide lights in schools. The action was taken after intense lobbying by five teachers who were exposed to radiation from a broken halide light during an all-day seminar. As in many schools, the halide lights were installed in the gymnasium.

The teachers endured extreme pain in their eyes, and in at least one case, long term damage. As it turns out, there is a more expensive halide bulb that would extinguish itself automatically within 15 minutes after breaking.

The lighting industry opposed the legislation on the grounds that the bulbs should have had protective coverings made of a tough, transparent material such as Plexiglas.

Burns from halide lights have been reported in at least four other states.

The lesson is that maintenance staff and teachers who use spaces lighted by halide lights need to be aware of the potential danger from any halide bulb which is not properly covered by a Plexiglas cover, and better yet, by a wire cage in addition. Staff should immediately close down a space whenever a halide bulb has been broken. Now is the time to take an inventory of halide bulbs throughout the district so that (a) staff members using halide lighted spaces can be advised, and (b) if necessary, self-extinguishing bulbs can be purchased and installed.

(Think of the human and financial costs of eye injury from broken halide light bulbs).

Visit our Website at [www.nysgroup491.com](http://www.nysgroup491.com)

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Program Administrator: Professional Underwriters, 1-800-833-882

## Mercury Cleanup Tips

Fluorescent and HID lamps contain mercury and must be managed properly in order to protect the health of staff, students and the environment. This becomes especially important when they burn out. **Mercury lamps cannot be lawfully placed in the trash.** There are three options: disposal of lamps as hazardous waste, recycling, and making an arrangement with your lamp distributor or an electrical contractor. The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation recommends recycling as a cost-effective disposal method. Disposal of lamps as hazardous waste can be expensive. If you choose to go with your lamp distributor or an electrical contractor, make sure that the firm is in compliance with state and federal regulations. Use the screening process listed below.

**To get a mercury recycling program going**, find out first how many fluorescent and HID lamps are in use, how many are disposed of each year, and what is done with broken or spent lamps. **Establish a process for collecting and managing used lamps as Universal Waste. Designate a safe, dry storage area**, and make sure that staff members know whom to call when a lamp burns out and what to do if one breaks. Store the used lamps in containers marked **“Universal Waste - Lamps.”** Mark the container with the date that collection began, and be sure to get them to a recycler within one year from that date.

Choose a recycling company from the NYSDEC List of Lamp Recyclers or NEWMOA List of Lamp Recyclers. NYSENCON recommends that you comparison shop. Mercury that is reclaimed on-site is generally less expensive than if it is shipped away to a processing center. Ask about:

1. Evidence of responsive service
2. Technical capability
3. Experience and references
4. Is Recycling verification provided in writing?
5. Environmental compliance history
6. Indemnity protection (min. of \$5 million)

7. Up-to-date permits for facilities and transportation
8. Are there extra costs for containers to pack the mercury in?
9. Are there different costs for different types of mercury?
10. Are you able to manage our other mercury wastes (other than fluorescent and HID bulbs?) At what cost?
11. Get it in writing.

**Establish a protocol and train staff for managing broken lamps.** Broken lamps should be picked up promptly, placing shards and spilled powder in a puncture-resistant, sealed, plastic bag or bucket. Wear gloves and use a damp cloth to sweep up the powder. Place all clean-up materials in a separate sealed container. **Do not vacuum or sweep with a broom. It will spread the mercury. Do not recycle or throw in the trash. They must be disposed of as hazardous waste.**

If a fluorescent lamp breaks on a carpet, the contaminated section of the carpet must be cut out and disposed of as hazardous waste. (A professional mercury spill clean-up contractor may have other safe, alternative methods to clean the carpet.)

All fluorescent bulbs, even those claiming to be “low mercury” are hazardous. Compact fluorescent bulbs also contain mercury so be sure to include them in your recycling plan.

You are required to report a mercury spill of one pound (two tablespoons) or more to the New York State DEC Spill Hotline: 1-800-457-7362.

For more information on disposing of spent mercury-containing lamps, see [www.newmoa.org/lamprecycle](http://www.newmoa.org/lamprecycle) or call 617-367-8558x305 or302.

For guidelines and advice on how to initiate a mercury cleanout of the whole school, see [www.dec.ny.gov/chemical](http://www.dec.ny.gov/chemical).

Summer Safety: Always watch children when they are in or near the water.

Reapply sunscreen every two hours or after swimming or excessive perspiring. Avoid the sun from 10am to 3pm. Use a sunscreen SPF of at least 15 - even on cloudy days.