

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

Lightning Risk Reduction

Lightning is one of nature's deadliest hazards. Here in the northeast, thunderstorms are common in the summer months and we are prone to downplay the risk of being struck by lightning. At work or at play outdoors, we need to realize that 47 people died and 246 sustained serious injuries from being struck by lightning in the U.S. last year.

People injured by lightning strikes do not recover easily. They sustain long term memory loss, attention deficits, sleep disorders, numbness, dizziness, stiffness in joints, irritability, fatigue, etc.

The National Weather Service (NWS) has succinct advice: ***"When Thunder Roars, Go Indoors!"*** The safest "indoor" location is a large enclosed building - not a picnic shelter or a shed, or a baseball dugout. "Safe" buildings have electrical wiring and plumbing which will route the electrical charge into the ground. (For that reason, stay away from showers, sinks, hot tubs, etc., and electronic equipment such as TVs, radios and computers.) The second safest location is an enclosed metal vehicle, car, truck, or van, but not a convertible, bike or other topless or soft top vehicle.

When a safe shelter is nearby, you should seek shelter when you first hear thunder, see dark threatening clouds developing nearby, or lightning. Stay inside until 30 minutes after you last hear thunder.

There is no safe place to be outside in a thunderstorm. Do not seek shelter under tall isolated trees or under partially enclosed buildings. Stay away from tall, isolated objects and metal objects such as fences, poles and backpacks. The current from a lightning flash travels easily for long distances through metal.

Avoid using electronic devices when you are outside and an electrical storm is threatening. There are a number of reports of injuries to users of personal

electronic devices such as beepers, Walkman players, iPods, and laptop computers. Metal in electronic devices conducts the electricity, causing serious burns. The same is true of metal jewelry or coins in a pocket.

Grounds workers, playground supervisors and coaches should be aware of the dangers of lightning strikes, and should definitely have a plan for lightning risk reduction. Some considerations:

1. Know your local weather patterns.
2. Schedule outdoor activities to avoid lightning.
3. Be in touch with the National Weather Service warning system through a portable radio on your person, or in touch with an office person with a radio.
4. Know when you are in danger of lightning and where to go for safety. Take stock of your surroundings before activity starts, and decide where you will seek shelter. Remember that it will take longer to get a group to safety than an individual.
5. Avoid the locations that have the greatest risk--elevated places, open areas, tall isolated trees and objects, bodies of water.
6. Anticipate the possible need for first aid - CPR, 911, an AED.
7. Brief the students on your action plan and how you arrived at it.

For a comprehensive curriculum on lightning safety including lesson plans, see www.lightningsafety.noaa.gov. Also see www.struckbylightning.org.

Lightning risk reduction depends on awareness and proper planning.

Visit our Website at www.nysgroup491.com

Email: info@nysgroup491.com

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

Help with Chemical Cleanup is Available

Schools use a variety of chemicals. When they are mismanaged, these chemicals can put students and school personnel at risk from spills, fires, and accidental exposures.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has developed a chemical management program to help schools clean up unused and unnecessary chemicals from their chemistry labs, janitor closets and bus garages. The SC3 web-based toolkit is designed to help schools start chemical management practices that will remove inappropriate, outdated, unknown and unnecessary chemicals, prevent future issues through training and policy change, and raise awareness of chemical issues in schools. The SC3 Toolkit will be useful as schools “go green.” See www.epa.gov/SC3.

HealthySEAT

HealthySEAT is a software tool to help school districts evaluate and manage their school facilities for key environmental, safety and health issues. The acronym stands for “Healthy School Environments Assessment Tool.”

Improve key environmental, safety and health issues in your school

The software is designed to be customized and used by district-level staff to conduct self-assessments of the facilities and to track and manage information on environmental conditions school by school. The kit also includes key elements of all of its regulatory and voluntary programs for schools and web links for more information. The software can be downloaded at no cost from the EPA website. The kit contains the most comprehensive health and safety checklist that we have seen. See www.epa.gov/schools/healthyseat.

Are You Prepared for Emergencies?

Would you know what to do if a co-worker was seriously injured, or if a fire started up, or if a structure collapsed? Emergencies happen - not just involving the other guy. When disaster strikes where no one is prepared to react, lives are lost.



How does one learn how to respond to an emergency? Preferably not through experience!

A good first step is to earn certification in Basic First Aid and CPR (Cardio Pulmonary Resuscitation). These courses teach important life saving skills, and they also teach how to respond to an emergency. American Red Cross courses also teach people about the kinds of situations and conditions that can precipitate an emergency. Being aware of what can happen and how to react will help you to react when the inevitable happens.

Review your organization’s emergency action plan periodically. Be aware of what steps to follow when calling for emergency help.

Keep your safety awareness at a high level through safety meetings, safety training and your own personal interests. Be prepared to answer the following questions:

1. How and whom do you notify in an emergency?
2. Are you prepared to act responsibly?
3. Should you stay with the injured person or run for help?
4. If you are not First Aid certified, do you know who of your co-workers is?
5. Does the emergency scene need to be secured?
6. Do you know the chain of command? Who is in charge during an emergency?

Know how to protect yourself and your co-workers.