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Fall 2013
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Featured...

Together
The Lodge of Four Seasons was, once again, the venue as MSPMA members met for their annual conference

Safety
A contractor’s commitment to safety is a strong indicator of the quality of workmanship you will get

Warnings
OSHA’s Hazard Communication Standard is designed to ensure that workers understand chemical dangers

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Cover photo: Warrensburg R-VI School District
Things change. Yes, things are always changing. We are constantly bombarded with new technology, new techniques, new processes and new problems. In fact, the only thing that we can count on not to change is change itself.

So how do we stay current and competitive today with this constant of change being a fact of our lives? How can we adequately meet the challenge of change that we are faced with each and every day?

Several years ago, I found myself at a crossroads of sorts in that I realized there was just no way that I was, by myself, going to be able to keep up with all the changes that were occurring on my campus. I knew that I was going to need help if I was going to effectively continue to meet the needs of my clients.

In looking for that help, I came across an organization that, while small, came highly recommended by one of my associates at a neighboring school. I was told that he belonged to an organization that offered information, training, mentoring and access to a group of trusted vendors. He said that they could provide me with the tools I needed to make well-reasoned and well-informed decisions.

I was a little skeptical at first, but in the years that followed, and with the many interactions that I have had with those who make up this group, I found that I have grown to trust and depend upon the close family of professionals that make up the membership of the Missouri School Plant Managers Association. I truly believe this is due, in part, to the fact that they have themselves been willing to change and improve upon the organization as the membership’s needs have evolved.

One of the latest changes taking place with this organization, and one that I am very excited about, was just announced at the Fall MSPMA Conference held at the Lodge of Four Seasons on September 29 through October 1. This change, due to kick off next year in the fall, is going to be extremely beneficial in helping the members of Missouri’s educational support staff operations rise to that next level of competence and expertise.

Called “Facilities Managers Core Certification,” it will consist of a two- to three-year regimen of training for directors and supervisors. This training will cover the gamut of skills needed to enhance and support those who run educational support staff operations.

Once a person is certified in the program, educational support and enhancement will be maintained by a required

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**Items of Interest**

**Tony Sloan**

Another great conference. Good speakers, good information, good fellowship, good spouses program, good entertainment. Most of this is because of Mike Fox and all of his planning. Please tell your friends at nearby schools what they missed.

We are working on the Facilities Directors Certification Program and will have details in the Spring issue of the Manager.

Have a great Holiday Season and New Year.

Tony Sloan
Executive Director, MSPMA
President’s Message

series of continuing education classes taken to maintain the certification. But what I believe to be most exciting about the program is the fact that everyone will be allowed to take any of the classes that are offered, everyone (from custodians to superintendents) will benefit from the training that will be provided, and thus everyone – the entire support staff entity – will be allowed to benefit from the program.

As you all know, it is no easy task to physically support the educational process. The challenges are many and the stakes are high. The future of our children, the future of our country, the future of our world, will be determined in no small part by the quality of our students’ education. Thus it is essential for us, they depend upon us, to provide an atmosphere that is conducive to, and enhances, the educational process. Those who educate and those who are educated deserve – and I truly believe are entitled to – the very best that we can offer through our support staff operations.

I want you to know that MSPMA committees are constantly exploring new avenues to expand the Association’s informational resource database and training abilities in order to ensure the membership is kept apprised of new changes, innovations and techniques regarding education and the physical support of educational facilities. Know that the MSPMA is constantly on the lookout for new ideas and professional relationships, and is diligently looking to create partnerships that provide innovative solutions to seemingly unsolvable problems.

The MSPMA is a vibrant and growing organization whose objective is to provide professional guidance and assistance to school plant managers and their respective organizations statewide. By providing this guidance, support and professional encouragement, it is the ultimate goal of the Association to assist and nurture a statewide network of support staff professionals focused on the creation of consistently efficient and effective educational environments that provide highly successful educational opportunities and experiences for all who educate and are educated.

On behalf of myself and the Board of Directors, please let me welcome you to the MSPMA! If you aren’t already a part, please come and join us today!
Reflecting back over the past year as President of the MSPMA, I must conclude that the organization had a great year! Again this year the MSPMA had increased attendance in both members and vendors, even with budget restraints that plague all of us today. The increased attendance shows that we are a strong organization that many individuals and school districts believe in.

A group of board members traveled to Wisconsin in November to evaluate the Facility Managers Certification program in that state and how we will implement a certification program for Missouri. Next year, as discussed at the past conference, we will be introducing a new Missouri Certification Program. I strongly believe that it will be very beneficial to us as individuals and the school districts across the state that each of us represents. I look forward to the implementation of the Certification Program, and I’m proud to be a part of such a great opportunity.

This year MSPMA lost a great supporter to our group and a wonderful lady. On Wednesday, October 23, Mrs. Donna Peoples, Commercial K-12 Account Manager from Lennox, passed away. Donna began her career with Lennox in 1974. Donna had numerous company awards and was HIGHLY respected within the Lennox organization and the HVAC industry. Since meeting Donna in 1999, if I ever had a problem or question or needed information from Lennox, Donna was the person to call. She will be greatly missed.

I would like to thank Mike Fox for his work to make this year’s conference a great one. The opening presentation from Dr. CJ Huff of Joplin School Districts was very moving, and the breakout sessions were informative.

Also, hats off to Tony Sloan for his dedication to and hard work for the MSPMA! Tony works year-round on the conference and with vendors to make sure we have a successful conference each year. We have a great vendor base that supports the MSPMA, and I thank each vendor who attends and supports our organization. Tony’s vision many years ago has made the MSPMA what it is today.

Finally, thank you to the Board of Directors for their countless hours dedicated to the MSPMA. I have learned a lot over the years from the board members. They continue setting the bar high to ensure that we have a strong organization for years to come.

In closing, I challenge each of you to bring a new member to the MSPMA conference next September and recommend to your vendors that they should be involved with the MSPMA.
Federal and state issues arise and disappear when solutions are identified.

Education reform is an issue that won’t go away. No one solution exists for education because it is tied to so many other problems currently existing in our culture.

Since we are all touched by education in some way, strong opinions are naturally formed.

The 44th annual Phi Delta Kappa International/Gallup poll of public attitudes toward public schools found widespread concern about funding, performance and other issues.

Funding was the most identified problem; 35 percent said it is the biggest obstacle for public schools.

A whopping 97 percent said improving the nation’s urban schools, where many minority and low-income students attend, is important. More than 60 percent said they’d be willing to pay higher taxes to improve the quality of urban schools.

There was less generosity toward children of illegal immigrants: Only 41 percent favored providing free education and school lunches to them.

Nearly nine in 10 said that closing the achievement gap between high- and low-achieving students is very or somewhat important.

Nearly two-thirds strongly disagreed when presented with the idea that a high school dropout is ready for the world of work. That number dropped to 18 percent when asked if high school graduates are ready for work.

More than 60 percent agreed with requiring students to attend school until age 18.

Generally, Americans were pleased with the public schools in their district, but were more skeptical of public schools taken as a whole. While 48 percent would give their local schools a grade of A or B, only 19 percent would say the same for public schools nationwide.

After funding, the next ranking problem in education was lack of discipline at eight percent.

Respondents considered balancing the federal budget to be more important than improving the quality of education. (The federal government provides about 10 percent of funding for public schools; the remainder is from state and local sources.)

Gallup also gauged the public’s feelings toward various education reform initiatives.

• An even 50% said the Common Core Standards (which 45 states plan to adopt by 2014) will increase the quality of public education, 40% said they will have no effect, and 8% think they will make education worse.

• Three-fourths of Americans said that Common Core Standard will result in more consistency across schools in education quality.

• A few more (52%) agreed with including standardized test scores in teacher evaluations than disagreed (47%).

• 57% believed entrance requirements for college teacher preparation programs should be more rigorous, and two-thirds believed that would result in more effective teachers.

• 71% of Americans say they have trust and confidence in teachers.

• Two-thirds supported the concept of charter schools.

• 55% opposed giving public vouchers for students to attend private schools.

• Seven out of 10 liked the idea of parent takeovers where parents can petition and vote to remove administration and staff at failing schools.

The PDK/Gallup data are from telephone interviews with 1,002 American adults during May and June 2012.

The message communicated by the poll is simple. People place higher value on balancing the budget than on improving education. They want education to be taken seriously with consistent, adequate, planned financial support. They want funding and whatever is needed to be directed to the nation’s urban schools where minority and low-income students attend, even if it means raising taxes to fund. However, this opinion does not hold true when illegal immigrants are considered.

They also want to close the achievement gap between high- and low-achieving students and to get school discipline under control. They believe that Common Core Standards would benefit education by providing consistency. Even though a solid 71 percent say they have confidence in teachers, a slight majority would be in favor of using students’ test scores as a part of a teacher evaluation and a clear majority likes the idea of parents taking over failing schools.

Meanwhile, at federal and state levels of government, and at state and local school board meetings, the quest to improve education continues. The solution to reform remains elusive because education is related to so many familial, societal and economic factors.
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Every day, school plant managers have a list of actions they must complete to keep their school buildings safe and healthy. To make their jobs a little easier, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Region 7 has created an online "one-stop shop" for a variety of educational and informational outreach materials that these professionals may need.

EPA Region 7’s Healthy Schools Toolkit, recently added to the agency’s website, offers a suite of free web-based resources, organized by subject area and designed to help school administrators and service providers — including school nurses, school plant managers and custodial staff — keep school buildings and facilities clean, green and healthy.

The Toolkit, accessible at www.epa.gov/region7/citizens/schools/toolkit.htm, is also intended to help the general public — including parents, students, school visitors and news media — better understand the importance of maintaining environmentally safe and healthy schools.

The Healthy Schools Toolkit consists of more than 50 educational and informational documents structured around 15 separate subject areas: Asbestos, Chemical Cleanout, Composting, Energy Star, Green Cleaning, Healthy Schools, School Integrated Pest Management (IPM), Lead, Mercury, Mold, PCBs, Radon, Rain Barrels, Rain Gardens and Recycling.

Materials include PowerPoint presentations, fact sheets, brochures, flyers, and lists of helpful resources and contact information. The contacts are specifically those who will be most helpful to Toolkit users who live in the states of Iowa, Kansas, Missouri and Nebraska.

The toolkit is the latest outreach effort from EPA Region 7’s broader Healthy Schools Initiative, which provides one-stop online access to programs and resources that can help prevent and resolve environmental issues in schools: www.epa.gov/region7/citizens/schools/index.htm

EPA Region 7’s Healthy Schools home web page includes a wealth of free resources besides the Healthy Schools Toolkit. Visitors to the page will find links to the EPA Headquarters’ Healthy Schools home page, the Children’s Health Protection home page, a virtual copy of EPA’s Healthy Schools Guidelines, and the Healthy Child Care Directory. The web page also offers tips on starting a Healthy Schools program, information about EPA’s voluntary guidelines for choosing safe school locations, and helpful links to a range of other federal and state school programs, models and policies.

Across the United States, more than 53 million children and about six million adults spend significant portions of their days in more than 120,000 public and private school buildings. Without proper attention, these facilities may present environmental conditions that inhibit learning and pose increased risks to the health of children, faculty, staff and visitors.

EPA’s goal is for the Toolkit’s educational outreach materials to be widely used as a helpful resource to help school service providers better protect our environment and our children, as well as school staff and school visitors.

School representatives with questions or comments about the new Healthy Schools Toolkit are urged to contact Kathleen Fenton, EPA Region 7’s Healthy Schools Coordinator, at 913-551-7874, or fenton.kathleen@epa.gov.

If any school is interested in partaking in a Healthy School assessment in Missouri, Iowa, Kansas, or Nebraska, there are currently limited resources available on a first-come, first-served basis, for a professional to visit their school for a preliminary Healthy School assessment. If interested, please contact Kathleen Fenton directly. You may also connect with EPA Region 7 on Facebook: www.facebook.com/eparegion7.
Mission Statement

Provide and direct the forum for stakeholders responsible for the educational environment.

Provide professional development.

Promote leadership to the profession through the exchange of data, information, ideas and ideals.

Promote research and establish a state system for the dissemination of its findings.

Lead policy-makers to improve the educational environment for all.
As many things change, most stay the same. For instance, as school plant managers we are incessantly dealing with the increasing challenges of maintaining the continually aging facilities of our districts with fewer and fewer dollars. What is always so impressive about the plant managers of this state and nation is that we tend to be very ingenious and creative with our jobs’ ever-shrinking budgets and increasing demands.

The 23rd Annual Missouri School Plant Managers Conference was held

Each MSPMA member received a hospitality gift with the registration packet.

The 2013 MSPMA Conference was held at the Lodge of Four Seasons in Lake Ozark.
A social gathering concluded the first full day of Conference proceedings.
Missouri School Plant Manager • Fall Post-Conference 2013

September 28 to October 1 at the Lodge of Four Seasons in Lake Ozark. This conference is always a great opportunity to discuss resolutions to our work challenges with colleagues from across the state. We also have the good fortune to be able to renew friendships, make new acquaintances to enhance our professional networks and share ideas. Vendors are present to share their products and knowledge in order to enhance our working environment.

One traditional aspect of the Conference is the golf tournament that kicks off our festivities with good fellowship and healthy competition. The annual golf tournament serves as an enjoyable method of raising money for the good cause of the MSPMA’s scholarship fund. This year’s golf tournament was organized by past MSPMA president Richard Jones. The attractive Osage National Golf Course served as the location for the golf tournament this year. There were 58 golfers that took advantage of the beautiful warm sunny fall day on the links.

The golf luncheon was kindly sponsored by Masters Equipment and Trane. Generous vendors that sponsored course holes and various golfing awards include Lennox, Hillyard, SchoolDude.com, Four State Maintenance, Buckeye International, Inc., Byrne & Jones Construction, Trane, Masters Equipment, Meyer Roofing & Sheeting Metal, Inc., H.E. Williams, Synergy Energy LLC., Roofing Sales & Associates, Tandus Flooring, American Boiler & Mechanical, Crescent Parts & Equipment, M360 Inc. and Midwest Machinery. After a great day of golf, everyone returned back to the Lodge of Four Seasons to prepare for the evening events.

Geneva Harris, a professional florist and designer, once again organized and led the spouses program. The spouses program created by Geneva Harris included painting on chairs
As some of us scrambled after the elusive white ball, Marie Sloan, Judy Jones, Lynn Mertens, Mike Fox and Doretta Fox served at the registration desk welcoming members, vendors and guests. Each member received the conference packet along with a couple of hospitality gifts. However, when registration concludes on this first evening, the MSPMA board members are still scrambling, except not after their golf balls. Instead, they are working on preparing and organizing the last-minute details of the Conference.

The Sunday evening’s activities concluded with an informal “Meet & Greet” social gathering at poolside. This gathering affords members, vendors and guests time to soak up the refreshing fall evening.

Prime rib and cheesecake were some of the items on the MSPMA banquet menu.
weather, engage in casual conversation and consume scrumptious sustenance all while listening to live music. The poolside event was made possible by the following generous corporate sponsors: Hillyard, Lennox, H.E. Williams, SchoolDude.Com and Byrne & Jones Sports. Afterwards, many moved their fellowship into the hotel lounge and observed in a little Sunday Night Football before retiring for the evening.

Conference registrants were able to start both Monday and Tuesday of the Conference with fantastic buffet breakfasts at the Breeze Restaurant. The breakfast on Monday was kindly sponsored by Buckeye International, Inc. Monday’s welcoming Conference remarks were presented by MSPMA President Shawn Dilday (Neosho R-5 School District) and Executive Director Tony Sloan.

The guest speaker for the opening session was Dr. CJ Huff, Joplin Superintendent of Schools. He captivated the audience with his recollection of the horrific moments during the Joplin tornado, the hours immediately following the storm and the tremendous teamwork that it took to rebuild a town and school district.

Following Dr. Huff, SchoolDude regional manager Brian Holland (an MSPMA board member) introduced an exciting opportunity to be considered for formal adoption by the MSPMA. In the near future MSPMA may soon provide the state plant managers a chance to earn a Facilities Manager Core Certification and sustain that certification with a Facilities Manager Continuing Education Program. This will provide Missouri plant managers with essential professional development opportunities that they have never had before.

Monday’s breakout sessions commenced

While conference registrants were soaking up valuable session information, their spouses were kept busy by Geneva Harris. She presented two sessions: one that included the creation of a Christmas swag and another painting a festive theme on a wooden chair. Thank you, Geneva, for helping out once again!

Following the first day’s breakout sessions, the members met in the exhibit hall for the trade show and opportunity to visit with the 106 vendors at their respective booths. Conference attendees were able to explore the most current and innovative products that have come on the market. The vendors are able to demonstrate how their products and services can assist plant managers in improving effectiveness and efficiency within their schools and work setting. All told, over 120 members participated in the trade show. At its closing, door prizes that were graciously donated by our vendors were distributed to many lucky winners. One more perk of the MSPMA Annual Conference.

Once door prizes were dispersed, regions conducted their annual meetings and the MSPMA’s group of past presidents assembled to deliberate Association strategies for the upcoming year. Once this business was complete, they had just enough time to run to their rooms and refresh before the evening festivities.

Promptly at 6 p.m., the members, their spouses and vendors congregated in the Marabella Ballroom for the much anticipated MSPMA Banquet and Entertainment. Dinner consisted of a mouth-watering prime rib, accompanied by crisp asparagus, tasty mashed potatoes and delectable cheesecake.

Following the meal, Shawn Dilday was applauded for his work as President, and he ceremonially passed on the gavel to the new MSPMA President, Mike Fox (Missouri Southern State University).

The entertainment for the evening was presented by Bucket and Boards. They are a hilarious, high-energy music show chock-full of precise percussion, ridiculous songs, spectacular tap dancing, inventive instrumentation and unique musical talent. They kept the crowd laughing and consistently amused throughout their hour-long show.

MSPMA closed out the first full day with tokens of appreciation to District Area Representatives and distribution of more door prizes to nearly every member and spouse in attendance.


Following the final conference sessions on Tuesday, the MSPMA elections were conducted and the board members met to debrief on the current conference and finalize the upcoming year’s executive board meetings. The next executive board meeting is planned for January 17th. In the meantime, several Board members are planning to travel to Wisconsin in November to converse with the Wisconsin school plant managers regarding the Certification Process they have successfully established. These members intend to return empowered to get the Missouri Plant Managers certification process and continuing education established.

The MSPMA Annual Conference was once again a huge success. Thank you to all that attended and took advantage of all the conference offerings, and congratulations to everyone involved in organizing the 2013 conference.

Many thanks to the Lodge of Four Seasons staff and management for their outstanding service, access to their facilities, and hospitality again this year.

The 2014 MSPMA Conference will once again be at the Lodge, September 28-30. Here is hoping that 2013 Conference attendees can return to next year’s conference. Each member is challenged to recruit a colleague from their area and bring them along to the 2014 Conference. See you next year!
Thanks to the following vendors for their participation in our 2013 Conference and Trade Show!

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Missouri School Plant Manager • Fall Post-Conference 2013
As a facility or plant manager, you are always planning, in the middle of, or finishing some sort of construction project. The projects can range in size and scope from a simple one-day project all the way up to a two- or three-month undertaking. No matter the size, many projects have numerous safety concerns that should not be taken lightly.

Construction work is inherently dangerous. When there is a half-hearted effort, when people are not properly trained or don’t have the proper tools and equipment, when workers do not pre-plan their work or when they take things for granted, people can be injured and even die as a consequence of bad choices.

The welfare of your students and faculty and being able to provide them with a safe learning and working environment is of the highest priority. People tend to think that safety measures and OSHA regulations are in place just to help prevent injuries and fatalities to the construction workers. While this is a major reason it’s not the only one.

Rarely are contractors the only people on site during a project. In a perfect world, all projects would take place when there are no students or faculty present. This is simply not possible in many circumstances.

Commitment to safety is also a very good indicator of the quality of workmanship you will receive. To have a top safety rating, you need to have well-trained and responsible employees who take their jobs seriously. This translates into workers who follow proper procedure and do not cut corners.

Just because a project is finished and the contractors have left does not mean that there are no longer any safety concerns. Sloppy workmanship and inattention to detail could spell disaster down the road when least expected.

How can you tell if a company is truly dedicated to safety? There are few things you can look for that will be good indicators of a contractor’s commitment to safety:

Experience Modification Rate – This is one of the quickest ways to get an overview of a contractor’s safety performance. When it comes to a “Mod Rate,” the lower the number the better the rate is, and the industry average is set to 1.0. Anything over 1 is worse-than-average performance and shows a lack of concern for safety and should be avoided. Less than 1 is better than the indus-
try average and shows a commitment to safe practices and procedures.

Company Safety and Training Program – Does the company provide comprehensive safety training to their employees? Any company that is committed to occupational safety should be more than happy to provide you with details about their safety program including training materials. Look for companies that employ their own in-house crews versus subcontractors. When dealing with subcontractors, the company has less control over its safety program and the subs can lack proper safety training.

OSHA Training - Does the company require their employees to attend an OSHA outreach training program? This is a voluntary 10- or 30-hour class that provides training for workers and employers on the recognition, avoidance, abatement, and prevention of safety and health hazards in workplaces in the construction industry. Proactive contractors usually require a minimum of 10 hours of training before allowing an employee onto a jobsite.

Drug Testing – Most safety-conscious contractors will require pre-employment drug screening as well as random testing throughout the year. This helps to prevent on-site workers from being under the influence when dealing with dangerous machinery and situations. Schools have a zero-tolerance drug policy in regards to their students and should expect the same from their contractors.

When it comes to different types of contracting, some are naturally more dangerous than others. Very near the top of the list would be roofing contractors. Safety record and performance should be one top criteria used when choosing which contractor to work with.

According to OSHA.gov, falls are the No. 1 cause of death or injury in the construction industry. They accounted for 36 percent of fatalities in 2012. Second on the list is “struck by object”: both of these are major concerns for roofing. A roofer spends the majority of his or her day off the ground or working with heavy machinery such as cranes lifting materials to high places. With this type of working environment, it is imperative that the contractor you choose to hire is committed to occupational safety.

But in the end, no matter what type what of project you are planning, it’s always a smart idea to go with a contractor that takes safety seriously and has a proven track record to show this. It can prevent third-party lawsuits, reduces liability and the chance for property damage, and helps ensure quality workmanship.

All of these help to reduce long-term construction costs and also provide everyone involved with a safer and healthier working environment.

JR & Co. Roofing Contractors has been installing commercial roof systems for over 27 years. A comprehensive occupational safety and health program for their employees has helped them earn an industry-leading “Mod Rate” (effective January 1, 2014) of .76.
OSHA’s Hazard Communication Standard and What You Should Know About It

PTR Communications

The U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) came into being in December 1970 when President Nixon signed the Occupational Safety and Health Act. Its mandate is broadly defined as to “assure safe and healthful working conditions for working men and women by setting and enforcing standards and by providing training, outreach, education and assistance.”

Recently OSHA, an agency of the Department of Labor, has acted for workplace safety with regard to the chemicals many of us use, through standards for conveying the type and seriousness of hazards associated with those chemicals. This is the world of the Globally Harmonized System (GHS) and OSHA’s Hazard Communication Standard (HCS).

The GHS is an internationally agreed-upon approach to classifying and labeling chemicals. The HCS is America’s application of the GHS through OSHA. It marks a major step forward in workers’ right not just to know but to understand the dangers posed by chemicals they’re using.

One important component of the new standard is the use of standardized pictograms (symbols) for different kinds of hazard. Each pictogram consists of a black picture inside a red diamond shape, on a white background. The pictograms are to be accompanied by signal words (such as “Warning” or “Danger”) and hazard statements to alert workers to health and safety risks.

Each container of hazardous chemicals must be labeled according to OSHA’s standard. If and when the chemicals are transferred into new containers, these containers must be labeled with the required information unless the chemical is being transferred for immediate use by the person performing the transfer.

The new HCS comes with training requirements. OSHA set a deadline of December 1, 2013, for workers to be trained in product labeling and the new 16-section format of the Safety Data Sheets. For some states with OSHA-approved safety standards the deadline is several months later, but in Missouri the deadline was December 1.

School employees who need to be trained include those who work in laboratories, car repair, woodwork, art activities (including painting and pottery), building maintenance and custodial duties.

OSHA’s website declares that the new system “provides people the right to know the hazards and identities of the chemicals they are exposed to in the workplace. When employees have this information, they may effectively participate in their employers’ protective programs and take steps to protect themselves. In addition, the standard gives employers the information they need to design and implement an effective protective program for employees potentially exposed to hazardous chemicals. Together these actions will result in a reduction of chemical source illnesses and injuries in American workplaces.”

A March 2012 article at the ScienceBlogs website quotes U.S. Labor Secretary Hilda Solis as saying the HCS “will reduce confusion, especially for low-wage and low-literacy workers.”

A March 2012 Department of Labor news release quotes Solis as saying “exposure to hazardous chemicals is one of the most serious dangers facing American workers today. Revising OSHA’s Hazard Communication Standard will improve the quality, consistency and clarity of hazard information that workers receive, making it safer for workers to do their jobs and easier for employers to stay competitive in the global marketplace.”

Information on how to comply with the HCS is available at www.osha.gov/dsg/hazcom/whatishazcom.html.
In 2012, 55 million students in nearly 98,000 public, 5,000 charter and 34,000 private schools were being served, supported, and educated by four million full-time teachers, para-educators, and other professionals in nearly 140,000 U.S. educational facilities. In 1995, a Government Accounting Office (GAO) report detailed environmental problems and deficiencies in U.S. educational facilities in areas of lighting, heating, ventilation, indoor air quality, noise, and physical security. In 2000, the U.S. Department of Education reported that “25% of U.S. schools need extensive repair or replacement of a building,” and that “40% of schools reported having at least one environmental problem.” When a subsequent report was issued in 2004, virtually nothing had changed.

This means that for at least the last 15 years, nearly one-fifth of the U.S. population spent the majority of each day in facilities that may have environmental conditions and issues that could adversely affect their health. And obviously the vast majority are children, who are the most susceptible to environmental hazards.

Asthma is the number one cause of missed school days (14,000,000 missed days per year) in the U.S. And since asthma is an environmental disease, it is critical that school and district staff are not only informed and on alert for common indoor environmental contaminants and irritants known as “asthma triggers,” but knowledgeable and skilled at managing facilities to minimize or eliminate asthma-triggering conditions.

Environmental hazards and asthma triggers present in facilities are brought in, inadvertently or on purpose, by staff and students, and can be associated with or result from routine operation and maintenance of buildings, or from the designed use for each space (science room, kitchen, restrooms, etc.).

“Some school facility systems (heating, cooling, other mechanical) may introduce contaminants through normal operation and use.”

Many schools have indoor air quality issues or problems
Airborne contaminant levels in schools may be higher than in other indoor environments where children spend time because greater numbers of occupants generally results in more contaminants and allergens being brought into a facility.

Some school facility systems (heating, cooling, other mechanical) may introduce contaminants through normal operation and use. Generally, this happens when systems have not been properly maintained or if they are not operating as they were designed to. One example is elevated levels of carbon monoxide (CO), a combustion gas byproduct, from the operation of heaters and boilers or from motor vehicles operated outside the facility.

When appliance exhaust fans are ineffective or not used to remove combustion gas byproducts, carbon monoxide may be present in appreciable levels within the facility. This is most often associated with kitchen staff simply not operating the exhaust hood located over the gas cooking appliances while in use. Even if all kitchen appliances are electric, the kitchen exhaust hood is also an effective way to remove excess moisture and humidity as well as other contaminants and particulates from the facility.

Other potentially serious allergy and asthma triggers include outside chemicals (cleaners, disinfectants, solvents, insecticides) and fragrance products being used and stored in the classroom. These items are often kept in unlocked cabinets, beneath a sink, or are even left out in the room, which is a serious exposure risk for young students. If a child is exposed to or ingests an outside chemical product, without a Safety Data Sheet (SDS) on hand, how do staff treat such an exposure or poisoning?

In addition, fragranced products are being used more and more by classroom staff and students, either to cover up disagreeable odors or because some research shows the benefits of certain fragrances on brain activity. Unfortunately, there are just as many studies implicating these same fragranced products in asthma attacks and other respiratory problems for children and other sensitive populations. Many of these products are
designed to routinely or continuously introduce the fragranced product into the air, meaning a child's exposure may be constant and unavoidable.

Ultimately, the goal of custodial staff is to try to remove allergens and contaminants from the facility and grounds.

The prior examples focused primarily on things inadvertently brought into schools, but there are often significant concerns with items that staff intentionally bring into the classroom.

A teacher may use an old chair, area rugs, and pillows, to create a warm and cozy reading area. Where did the chair come from? Was it sitting in a damp and musty basement before it was brought in? Is it upholstered? If so, will it be vacuumed on a routine basis? Another concern is that “shared” items could exacerbate the spread of lice from student to student within a classroom.

This barely scratches the surface regarding ongoing environmental issues causing health problems for students and staff in U.S. schools. It is my hope to shed light on the pervasive and documented nature of the situation and how little is being addressed, while emphasizing the health and financial benefits associated with safe and healthy school environments. The institution of good environmental policies, student and staff asthma education, and effective practices and procedures can help control, minimize, and often eliminate any one of a variety of environmental concerns.

“Our children are our future” and the importance of a good education are broadly understood and accepted notions. That we know our children’s learning environments can be causing or exacerbating ill health — and that healthy children are better learners — must also become understood and accepted. And work toward providing safe and healthy learning environments everywhere should become a top priority, as quickly as possible.
What’s a Sick Building?

The term “sick building syndrome” (SBS) is used to describe situations in which building occupants experience acute health and comfort effects that appear to be linked to time spent in a building, but no specific illness or cause can be identified. The term “building related illness” (BRI) is used when symptoms of diagnosable illness are identified and can be attributed directly to airborne building contaminants.

A 1984 World Health Organization Committee report suggested that up to 30 percent of new and remodeled buildings worldwide may be the subject of excessive complaints related to indoor air quality (IAQ). Often this condition is temporary, but some buildings have long-term problems.

Indicators of SBS include:
- Building occupants complain of symptoms associated with acute discomfort (e.g., headache, eye irritation, dry cough, dry or itchy skin).
- The cause of the symptoms is not known.
- Most of the complainants report relief soon after leaving the building.

Indicators of BRI include:
- Building occupants complain of symptoms such as cough, chest tightness, fever, chills and muscle aches.
- The symptoms can be clinically defined and have clearly identifiable causes.
- Complainants may require prolonged recovery times after leaving the building.

It is important to note that complaints may result from other causes, such as illnesses contracted outside the building, acute sensitivity (e.g., allergies), and job-related stress. Nevertheless, studies show that symptoms may be caused or exacerbated by IAQ problems.

Causes of SBS

The following have been cited causes or contributing factors:

INADEQUATE VENTILATION: In the early and mid 1900s, building ventilation standards called for approximately 15 cubic feet per minute (cfm) of outside air for each building occupant, primarily to dilute and remove body odors. As a result of the 1973 oil embargo, however, national energy conservation measures called for a reduction in the amount of outdoor air provided for ventilation to 5 cfm per occupant. In many cases these reduced outdoor air ventilation rates were found to be inadequate to maintain the health and comfort of building occupants. Inadequate ventilation, which may also occur if heating, ventilating, and air conditioning (HVAC) systems do not effectively distribute air to people in the building, is thought to be an important factor in SBS. In an effort to achieve acceptable IAQ while minimizing energy consumption, the American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE) recently revised its ventilation standard to provide a minimum of 15 cfm of outdoor air per person (20 cfm/person in office spaces).

CHEMICAL CONTAMINANTS: Most indoor air pollution comes from sources inside the building. For example, adhesives, carpeting, upholstery, manufactured wood products, copy machines, pesticides, and cleaning agents may emit volatile organic compounds (VOCs), including formaldehyde. Research shows that some VOCs can cause chronic and acute health effects at high concentrations, and some are known carcinogens. Low to moderate levels of multiple VOCs may also produce acute reactions. The outdoor air that enters a building can also be a source of indoor air pollution. For example, pollutants from motor vehicle exhausts, plumbing vents, and building exhausts (e.g., bathrooms and kitchens) can enter the building through poorly located air intake vents, windows, and other openings. In addition, combustion products can enter a building from a nearby garage.

BIOLOGICAL CONTAMINANTS: Bacteria, molds, pollen, and viruses are types of biological contaminants. These contaminants may breed in stagnant water that has accumulated in ducts, humidifiers and drain.
pans, or where water has collected on ceiling tiles, carpeting, or insulation. Sometimes insects or bird droppings can be a source of biological contaminants. Physical symptoms related to biological contamination include cough, chest tightness, fever, chills, muscle aches, and allergic responses such as mucous membrane irritation and upper respiratory congestion. One indoor bacterium, Legionella, has caused both Legionnaire’s Disease and Pontiac Fever.

These elements may act in combination, and may supplement other complaints such as inadequate temperature, humidity, or lighting. Even after a building investigation, however, the specific causes of the complaints may remain unknown.

**Building investigation**

The goal of a building investigation is to identify and solve IAQ complaints in a way that prevents them from recurring and which avoids the creation of other problems. To achieve this goal, it is necessary for the investigator(s) to discover whether a complaint is actually related to air quality, identify the cause of the complaint, and determine the most appropriate corrective actions.

An IAQ investigation procedure is best characterized as a cycle of information gathering, hypothesis formation, and hypothesis testing. It generally begins with a walkthrough inspection of the problem area to provide information about the four basic factors that influence indoor air quality: the occupants, the HVAC system, possible pollutant pathways, and possible contaminant sources.

Although air sampling for contaminants might seem to be the logical response to occupant complaints, it seldom provides information about possible causes. While certain basic measurements – e.g., temperature, relative humidity, CO2, and air movement – can provide a useful “snapshot” of current building conditions, sampling for specific pollutant concentrations is often not required to solve the problem and can even be misleading. Contaminant concentration levels rarely exceed existing standards and guidelines even when occupants continue to report health complaints. Air sampling should not be undertaken until considerable information on the factors listed above has been collected, and any sampling strategy should be based on a comprehensive understanding of how the building operates and the nature of the complaints.

**Solutions to SBS**

Solutions to sick building syndrome usually include combinations of the following.

- Pollutant source removal or modification is an effective approach to resolving an IAQ problem when sources are known and control is feasible. Examples include routine maintenance of HVAC systems (e.g., periodic cleaning or replacement of filters), replacement of water-stained ceiling tiles and carpeting, venting contaminant source emissions to the outdoors, and allowing time for building materials in new or remodeled areas to off-gas pollutants.

- Increasing ventilation rates and air distribution often can be a cost-effective means of reducing indoor pollutant levels. HVAC systems should be designed, at a minimum, to meet ventilation standards in local building codes; however, many systems are not operated or maintained to ensure that these design ventilation rates are provided. In many buildings, IAQ can be improved by operating the HVAC system to at least its design standard, and to ASHRAE Standard 62-1989 if possible.

- Water heating systems can provide a useful “snapshot” of current building conditions, sampling for specific pollutant concentrations is often not required to solve the problem and can even be misleading. Contaminant concentration levels rarely exceed existing standards and guidelines even when occupants continue to report health complaints. Air sampling should not be undertaken until considerable information on the factors listed above has been collected, and any sampling strategy should be based on a comprehensive understanding of how the building operates and the nature of the complaints.

- **Education and communication** are important elements in both remedial and preventive indoor air quality management programs. When building occupants, management, and maintenance personnel fully communicate and understand the causes and consequences of IAQ problems, they can work more effectively together to prevent problems from occurring, or to solve them if they do.

(For a more detailed discussion of ventilation, read Indoor Air Facts No. 3R, Ventilation and Air Quality in Office Buildings.)

Air cleaning can be a useful adjunct to source control and ventilation but has certain limitations. Particle control devices such as the typical furnace filter are inexpensive but do not effectively capture small particles; high performance air filters capture the smaller particles that can be breathed in, but they are relatively expensive to install and operate. Mechanical filters do not remove gaseous pollutants. Some specific gaseous pollutants may be removed by adsorbent beds, but these devices can be expensive and require frequent replacement of the adsorbent material. In sum, air cleaners can be useful, but have limited application.

Education and communication are important elements in both remedial and preventive indoor air quality management programs. When building occupants, management, and maintenance personnel fully communicate and understand the causes and consequences of IAQ problems, they can work more effectively together to prevent problems from occurring, or to solve them if they do.

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PalmerHamilton’s cutting-edge designed Food Courts create an atmosphere students recognize as a social dining destination. It is the place to be! Because of the friendly surroundings, sleek colors and stylish art, students want to be in the Food Court which results in greater participation, higher customer satisfaction and increased revenue.
Have you ever heard someone refer to his current employment or life condition as “living the dream”? As corny as it may sound, I can safely say that statement is indicative of my current position. Never in a million years would I have ever thought that almost 30 years after graduating from Warrensburg High School I would be blessed to be Superintendent of Schools in my home town.

Most valuable to me as Superintendent is the multitude of relationships and connections I have developed over the past 30 years. Still today, educators work in our district who were my teachers in high school. To now be their Superintendent is very special to me (and, I am sure, quite surreal for them). I also have the pleasure of working with some of my own high school classmates, former students from my teaching days, and, of course, many other friends and family members who still have connections to the district. These relationships enable us all to work together toward a shared vision and common goals, allowing us to better serve our students, staff and community.

Another strong aspect of our community is its long history of excellence in education that extends well beyond our school district. As the home of the University of Central Missouri (an institution founded upon the training of teachers), Warrensburg’s tradition and expectation of academic excellence are deeply embedded throughout our community. Our close affiliation with Whiteman Air Force Base is another strong influence in our community. The fact that so many military personnel choose to return to Warrensburg (both before and after retirement) emphasizes our community’s strength. Along with many other factors, including a strong commercial and agricultural sector, I believe people in our community understand the value of education and have proven time and time again they support the district’s future.

In April of 2014, we will again give our community the opportunity to show their support of our school district. Like many school districts across the state of Missouri, the Warrensburg R-VI School District continues to try and find ways to counteract decreasing funding streams from both the state and federal government. In the past, our district has significantly cut its budget and has deficit spent to maintain our current programs and facilities. While our district is blessed with an excellent staff and high-quality facilities, we can no longer function effectively with our current tax base. Thus, our school district is now poised to pursue one of the most aggressive bond and levy campaigns in our district’s history.

While our campaigning will not officially begin until January 2014, our Board of Education, staff, and community have already been informed of our district’s needs. It is now our responsibility as a district to show our patrons how great our needs are and why they should support a significant tax increase.

No matter the result of the election in April 2014, my “dream” will still be alive in Warrensburg as long as there are people involved who want what is best for our students.
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