

# HEALTH & SAFETY

A NEWSLETTER FOR NYSUT'S HEALTH AND SAFETY LEADERS

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[www.nysut.org](http://www.nysut.org)

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## New study shows safety is No.1 worker concern

A new study from the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) at the University of Chicago shows that 85 percent of workers surveyed rank workplace safety first in importance among labor standards — ahead of family and maternity leave, minimum wage, paid sick days, overtime pay and the right to join a union.

The “Public Attitudes Toward and Experiences with Workplace Safety” study is based on dozens of surveys and polls. The study found that even with broad public concern about workplace safety, workplace disasters are what the media and the public tend to notice. In those tragedies, workers’ fate is regularly overshadowed by other results, such as environmental impact as was seen during

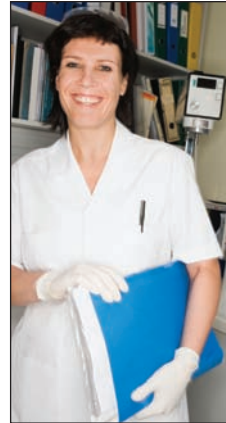
the recent Gulf of Mexico oil well disaster.

Despite a decrease in workplace fatalities, the study found reports of incidents of injury at work to be high. The new study found that about 12 percent of workers reported an on-the-job injury during the past year and of those, more than one in three said they had required medical treatment at least once for a workplace injury.

Most workers say they are satisfied with safety conditions at work, but also report job-related stress. Stress is a contributing factor to injury. The most recent

NORC study on job-related stress, from 2006, reported 13 percent of workers find their jobs always stressful, and 21 percent find their jobs often stressful.

“This report is no surprise,” said Darryl Alexander, the American Federation of Teachers Health and Safety Program director. “Workers endure hazards every day; including the much ignored problem of workplace stress. We in the labor movement will continue fighting on behalf of our members to insure the quality of their working lives.”



The survey report is available at [www.publicwelfare.org/resources/DocFiles/NORCworksafety.pdf](http://www.publicwelfare.org/resources/DocFiles/NORCworksafety.pdf)

## Sharpen your skills at H&S conference in Saratoga

The next NYSUT statewide Health and Safety Conference will be held March 4–5, 2011, at the Saratoga Springs Hilton. We have an exciting program lined up. There will be a broad selection of great workshops important to local leaders and health and safety activists. Workshop highlights from the tentative program include:

- Extended Friday afternoon sessions on workplace stress and negotiating health and safety language
- Workplace bullying
- Health care tasks and non-health care staff



Kathleen Donahue

- Two-part sessions on health and safety 101, indoor environmental quality and organizing effective health and safety committees

If you are on our mailing list, look for the conference postcard announcement in your mailbox next month. Otherwise, check the NYSUT workplace health and safety Web page at [www.nysut.org](http://www.nysut.org) for the online registration information. Join us for an exciting program!

“Our member activists help protect their colleagues, students and patients,” said NYSUT Vice President Kathleen Donahue. “I urge you to

attend the conference, sharpen your skills and go back to your workplace ready for the next challenge. I look forward to seeing you in Saratoga.”

**Mark your calendars for March 4-5, 2011**

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Representing more than 600,000 professionals in education and health care  
For more, see [www.nysut.org](http://www.nysut.org).

# Whistleblower protection information available online

Did you know that OSHA currently administers 18 federal whistleblower protection statutes? OSHA knows that workers who “blow the whistle” on prohibited or unlawful practices in the workplace, as well as on safety and health discrimination, play an important role in assuring compliance with federal laws. Now it’s easier to find out how to access those protections because OSHA has developed a new website for its whistleblower protection program — [www.whistleblowers.gov](http://www.whistleblowers.gov).

The Web page provides information about worker rights and provisions under each of the whistleblower statutes and regulations that OSHA enforces. It includes program fact sheets and information that explains how to file a retaliation complaint with OSHA.

Workers who have training on OSHA know that private sector workers may file discrimination complaints with OSHA if they believe their employer retaliated against them for exercising rights protected by the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970. What they don’t know is that private and public sector workers may also file whistleblower complaints with OSHA if they believe their employer has retaliated



against them for exercising their rights related to air carrier safety, asbestos in schools, commercial motor carrier safety or security, environmental issues, nuclear safety, public transportation agency, rail safety or security, and several other statutes. For each of the statutes covered by OSHA, the Web page gives workers information on timeframes for filing, the complaint investigation process, case settlement, reinstatement, paying back wages, restoration of benefits, and other possible remedies.

## HEALTH & SAFETY

*Health & Safety* is a newsletter published periodically for New York State United Teachers’ Health and Safety Committee members. NYSUT locals and staff have permission to reprint all *Health & Safety* content.

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## You can buy less-toxic supplies for school and office

School has already started, but many NYSUT members buy school or office supplies throughout the year for themselves, their union locals and for students who don’t have what they need. If you’re interested in reducing chemical exposures, there are resources to help you find less-toxic supplies.

Two organizations offer online guides to assist with safer school product purchasing.

The Environmental Working Group has a back-to-school guide on the web at <http://tinyurl.com/2wscr9c>. The guide gives information on what ingredients to avoid in art supplies, markers, pencils and pens, notebooks and binders, glue, water bottles and more.

The “back-to-school guide to PVC-Free School Supplies” is from The Center for Health, Environment and Justice (CHEJ.). It focuses on phasing out the use of toxic PVC plastic in schools. The guide explains: “PVC, polyvinyl chloride, is unique among plastics because it contains dangerous chemical additives. These harmful chemicals include phthalates, lead, cadmium, and/or organotins, which can be toxic to your child’s health. What’s worse is the danger these chemicals

pose — phthalates and other toxic additives can leach out or evaporate into the air over time, posing unnecessary dangers to children. Over 90 percent of all phthalates are used to soften or plasticize PVC products.”

When PVC is manufactured or burns in a fire, it also forms and releases dioxins, which are a group of chemicals that can cause cancer and harm immune and reproductive systems.

CHEJ’s guide tells you what to avoid in a variety of products and lists specific name brand products and supplies that are PVC-free. Products listed include pens and pencils, notebooks, cell phones, computers, dry erase markers, report covers, lunch boxes, address books and covers and modeling clays.

You can find the link to the guide at [www.besafenet.com/pvc/](http://www.besafenet.com/pvc/)

If you are looking for these products to be union made, or at least made in the U.S, you will have to do some homework since many of these are made overseas. While recent headlines warn consumers of certain products made in China in particular, makers of these less-toxic items have their operations in other countries as well.



## NEA offers interactive course online

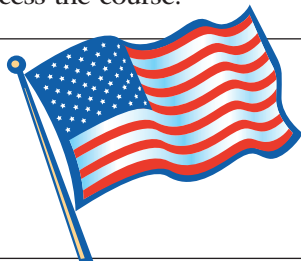
The NEA and the NEA Health Information Network are pleased to announce a new online training course, "What's Your IEQ? A Roadmap to School Indoor Environmental Quality." This course was developed by NEA and NEA HIN as part of NEA's Online Academy. The 4½ hour interactive course is free to NEA members and to other members of the school community such as parents, administrators, and school board members. Its design incorporates nationally recognized, research-based standards for online professional development and provides teachers and School-Related Professionals the opportunity to obtain certificate hours and other professional development credit.

The course will educate members, state affiliate staff, and others on how to identify, prevent, and resolve IEQ issues like mold and moisture problems, chemical exposure, asbestos, radon, and more. The five modules cover topics such as ventilation and the design, construction and location of schools; the effects of IEQ on performance and health; common pollutant sources; and how to organize around the issue of poor IEQ as a local association.

- Course content modeled after the U.S. EPA's Indoor Air Quality Tools for Schools Program
- Pre- and post-knowledge-based assessments for each module
- Practical assignments with opportunities for hands-on application and reflection
- A bulletin board for users to share ideas and network
- Handouts, additional resources, and a glossary
- Survey questions for users to share their opinions
- A professional development page that contains detailed information on how this course can help members achieve their goals for professional growth and development

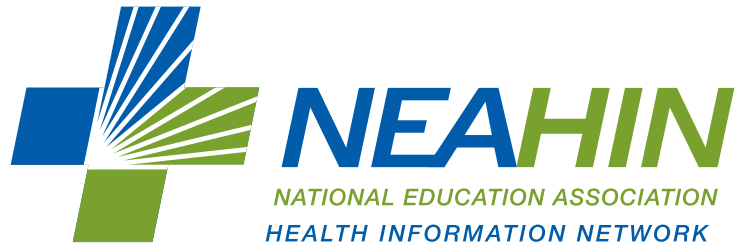
### To access the course:

You must register for a password through the NEA Academy. Go to [www.neabin.org/onlinetraining/index.html](http://www.neabin.org/onlinetraining/index.html) and click on "What's Your IEQ? A Roadmap to School Indoor Environmental Quality" for instructions on how to access the course.



**Don't forget to vote Nov. 2!  
It's your right and responsibility.**

## Other opportunities from NEA



*NEA Health Information Network (HIN) has announced three opportunities to win grants and awards for their Indoor Environmental Quality Programs (IEQ).*

### Funding to Attend IAQ Symposium

Your local could be one of 11-15 teams of members (approximately 50 persons) going to Washington, D.C., for the EPA Indoor Air Quality Tools for Schools (IAQ TFS) National Symposium, January 2011. NEA provides the all-expense-paid trip to D.C. for teams to learn how to ensure their schools are healthier places to work and learn.

Application deadline is Nov. 1.

Find out more: <http://neabin.org/iaqsymposium/index.html>

### IEQ Online Course Grant Program

Participants earn professional development credit for learning how to make schools greener and healthier. Grants of \$75 per person are available for teams of three to four members or staff to take the online course, "What's Your IEQ? A Roadmap to School Indoor Environmental Quality".

Application deadline is Jan. 5, 2011.

Learn more at <http://neabin.org/onlinetraining/teamgrant.html>

### 2011 C.L.E.A.N. Award

Nominate yourself or your NYSUT member custodians for the C.L.E.A.N. Awards Program, which recognizes custodial leaders for their contributions to school health. Custodians have a chance to win a cash award and an all-expense-paid trip to the National ESP Conference.

Applications or nominations must be postmarked by Dec. 1.

Learn more at [www.neabin.org/cleanaward/apply2011](http://www.neabin.org/cleanaward/apply2011)



## How to get a truly “green” lawn

Fall is a good time to work on getting a truly “green” lawn. A recently announced initiative from the New York Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) will make it easier to get a truly “green” lawn or landscape. The “Be Green Organic Yards NY” will promote training and licensing of organic yard care providers. This fall, the DEC expects to begin training yard care businesses in the requirements needed to use the “Be Green” service mark, which means a business uses only products and materials that meet DEC’s conditions for organic management of lawns, plants and trees. Homeowners will be able to find lawn care companies to provide organic yard management by looking for the Be Green logo. Find out more at: [www.dec.ny.gov/public/65071.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/public/65071.html)

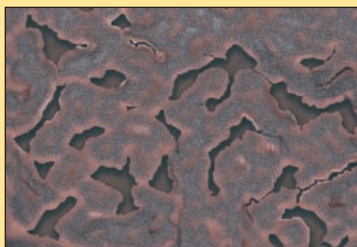


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## Mold course

The EPA’s “Introduction to Mold and Mold Remediation for Environmental and Public Health Professionals” provides an overview of mold prevention and mold remediation. It is based on the EPA’s voluntary March 2001 guidance document *Mold Remediation in Schools and Commercial Buildings*. Find the guide at: [www.epa.gov/mold/mold\\_remediation.html](http://www.epa.gov/mold/mold_remediation.html)



Public health and environmental health professionals who are involved with mold issues may be interested in this course. Building managers, custodians, remediators, contractors and other professionals who respond to mold problems may also want to refer to this course.

This course does not cover all situations and all potentially useful methods or techniques. Take the course at: [www.epa.gov/mold/moldcourse/index.html](http://www.epa.gov/mold/moldcourse/index.html)



## Schools chemical cleanout campaign (SC3)

[www.epa.gov/epawaste/partnerships/sc3/index.htm](http://www.epa.gov/epawaste/partnerships/sc3/index.htm)

From elementary school maintenance closets to high school chemistry labs, schools use a variety of chemicals. Mismanaged chemical use can put students and school employees at risk from spills, fires and other accidental exposures. Chemical accidents disrupt school schedules and can cost thousands of dollars to fix.



All schools need to be free from hazards associated with mismanaged chemicals. SC3 gives K-12 schools information and tools to manage chemicals responsibly.



## Emergency planning resources for work and home

American Public Health Association’s “Get Ready” campaign helps Americans prepare themselves, their families and their communities for all disasters and hazards, including pandemic flu, infectious disease, natural disasters and other emergencies. The site has free resources for the public and health workers to get tips on emergency planning from fact sheets on work, floods, heat waves, power outages and winter storm readiness. Also on the site is “Get Ready: Set Your Clocks, Check Your Stocks,” ([www.getreadyforflu.org/clocksstocks/index.htm](http://www.getreadyforflu.org/clocksstocks/index.htm)) which encourages people to check their emergency stockpiles when they change their clocks for daylight saving time; and the Get Ready Scholarship. ([www.getreadyforflu.org/new\\_pg\\_scholarship.htm](http://www.getreadyforflu.org/new_pg_scholarship.htm))

Resources in addition to fact sheets include a blog, a Twitter, podcasts, Q&As and a calendar of events.



Find it at [www.getreadyforflu.org/newsite.htm](http://www.getreadyforflu.org/newsite.htm)

