

HEALTH & SAFETY

A NEWSLETTER FOR NYSUT'S HEALTH AND SAFETY LEADERS

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Turf pesticides ban takes effect

In May, a new state law took effect that prohibits the use of toxic pesticides on open spaces and playing fields at K-12 public and private schools. This is the first legislation of its kind in the U.S.

The law requires that lawn or turf management must be done with the least toxic methods on open spaces and playing fields at all public and private schools from kindergarten through 12th grade and at day care centers. Protecting children's health from exposure to toxic pesticides is a primary goal of the law.



NYSUT V.P.
Kathleen Donahue

A large coalition of more than twenty groups, including NYSUT, supported the legislation. "We are always interested in protecting children's health," said NYSUT Vice President Kathleen Donahue. "But this

law will also protect our members who take care of turf grass. They have been directly exposed to pesticides as they maintained school lawns and playing fields."

Why this law makes sense

Three recent 12-year independent studies show that even pre-natal exposure to organophosphate pesticides affects children. Organophosphates are well-known neurotoxins and target insects' nervous systems. Two studies



looked at more than 660 children in New York City whose exposures came primarily from indoor use of pesticides to control cockroaches and other insects. The other study was done in California and looked at 329 children whose exposures were mostly from living and working near where pesticides were used in agriculture.

All three studies showed that the children with the highest prenatal exposures had IQ scores as much as seven points lower than children with the lowest prenatal pesticide exposures. That seven-point reduction is more than enough to affect a child's reading and math skills and cause behavioral problems with potentially long-lasting impacts, according to the studies. Continuing exposure is an important factor in these children's health.

A National Cancer Institute study found that children were up to six times more likely to get childhood leukemia when pesticides were used in the home and garden, and other research has demonstrated links between exposure to pesticides and

endocrine disruption and neurological problems.

Pesticide exposure has long been known to cause serious health problems in adults, and more recent case-control studies show a statistically significant association with pesticide exposure and development of Parkinson's Disease.

Won't this law cost schools more money?

Grassroots Environmental, a Long Island-based children's health advocacy group, published a report in 2010 comparing costs of chemical vs. organic turf in-house management. The co-author, Charles Osborne, is a professional turf consultant and chair of the Town of Marblehead Recreation, Parks and Forestry Commission.

The report looked at typical costs for a 65,000 square foot high school football field using both techniques. An analysis of data demonstrated that once an organic turf management program is established, it can result in more than 25 percent savings over a conventional chemical program. Startup costs are incrementally higher but by year three, an organic turf program costs less and by year five, there can be more than a 25 percent annual savings. Visit www.grassrootsinfo.org/gbl/index.html to view the report.

**"...this law will also protect our members who take care of turf grass."
— Kathleen Donahue**



Representing more than 600,000 professionals in education and health care
For more, see www.nysut.org.

INSIDE

Coping with heat illness

Page 2

Web resources

Page 3

Legislative update

Page 4

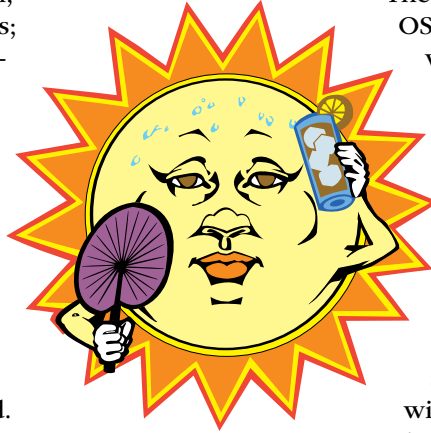
Heat illness should be a concern

OSHA has a new heat illness Web page that includes educational materials in English and Spanish, including low-literacy fact sheets for workers; worksite and community posters; and a public service announcement from U.S. Secretary of Labor Hilda Solis.

Heat can be especially dangerous for workers in jobs ranging from agriculture and landscaping to construction, road repair, airport baggage handling and even car sales.

"If you're working outdoors, you're at risk for heat-related illnesses that can cause serious medical problems and even death," said Solis. "But heat illness can be prevented. This Labor Department campaign will reach across the country with a very simple message — wa-

ter, rest and shade."



The Web page also includes a video from OSHA head Dr. David Michaels (in English with a Spanish transcript). The page will also have a lesson plan that employers can use to train workers to stay safe in the heat and a heat index smartphone app.

Visit www.osha.gov/SLTC/heatillness/index.html for more information.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) will integrate worker safety precautions when heat alerts are issued across the country. NOAA will include related worker safety information on its heat watch Web page.

Tornadoes devastate regions in the Midwest: Learn how to better prepare

This spring a record-breaking number of tornadoes caused death and destruction to several United States communities, particularly regions in the Midwest.

Tornadoes can happen anywhere in the world, but they happen most frequently in the United States. Tornadoes are extremely powerful, capable of destroying even well-constructed homes and buildings, uprooting trees and hurling heavy pieces of debris. The American Public Health Association (APHA) just released a new fact sheet on "How to get ready for tornadoes" that we encourage you to distribute and

share with your communities.

Unfortunately, tornadoes often strike with little or no warning, but knowing the signs of a coming tornado and familiarizing yourself with tornado warning signals can help to keep you and your loved ones safe.

National Hurricane Preparedness Week was observed May 22-28. September 2011 will mark the eighth annual National Preparedness Month.

APHA's "Get Ready" campaign, which offers emergency preparedness information on a variety of topics, recently released six additional fact sheets, available in both English and Spanish, dealing with emergency preparedness.

Topics include:

- How to get ready for a tsunami
- Home safe home: Being prepared can prevent a disaster at home
- How to get ready for hurricanes
- Protect yourself from mosquito-borne disease
- Well-built: The importance of safe building
- Staying put in a disaster: How to shelter in place

Visit www.getreadyforflu.org/new_pg_facts.htm for more information.



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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Guidance on Heat Index Procedures

Summer is here and it is getting hot. Summer school, outside activities and athletic practices take place during these months. Check out this New York State Public High School Athletic Association guide to help make sure you're not putting students or yourself at risk of heat-related illness. The guide also gives instructions on water breaks and symptom monitoring for varying levels of hot weather.

<http://nysphsaa.org/safety/HeatChillProcedures.asp>



Find less toxic sunscreens and other sun skin products

The sun is out and it is important to protect yourself against too much sun exposure. But finding effective products that also minimize the risk to your health can be a challenge.

The Environmental Working Group (EWG) has ratings of sunscreens, lip balms, moisturizers and makeups in their Sunscreen Guide. The guide gives information about sunscreen efficacy and other facts about sunscreens. You can search a database of more than 1,700 products that have been reviewed for their impacts on health.

EWG also has a page that can help decipher the labels on personal care products. Visit www.ewg.org/healthyhometips/ingredientsinpersonalcareproducts or <http://breakingnews.ewg.org/2011sunscreens/> for more information.



Green educator resources for higher ed and K-12

Get ready for fall and integrate sustainability into your curriculum. You can find inspiring and concrete ideas on how to utilize the building environment as the context of learning! The US Green Building Council has compiled many examples of programs done by schools and colleges across the country and made them available for others to use.



As the USGBC says, "Education efforts are key to ensuring every student lives in sustainable cities, communities and on green campuses. The reorientation of K-12 and higher education programs toward sustainability and green building is critical to preparing students for a broadening green marketplace."

Visit the site's Green Educator Resources page at: www.usgbc.org/DisplayPage.aspx?CMSPageID=1878 to read the model education programs and curriculum.



Children and brain trauma: Resources for educators and staff

Each year more than one million children sustain brain injuries ranging from mild to severe, according to the Centers for Disease Control. Since children's brains are still developing, the extent of trauma may not immediately be apparent. However, as a child with a brain injury grows and develops, problems seen may include deficits in attention and concentration, memory and organizational skills, changes in behavioral functioning, social skills and emotional control. All of these may negatively impact a child's learning experience.

The Brain Injury Association of New York State (BIANYS) has developed LEARNet, a user-friendly, interactive website designed to help children and adolescents with brain injury, their families, educators and healthcare personnel. The website has more than 50 tutorials, instructional videos and glossary of brain injury related terms. There is a section for educators, where "Traumatic Brain Injury: A Guidebook for Educators" can be downloaded in .pdf form.

Visit www.projectlearn.net and www.bianys.org to learn more.

FEDERAL

Federal bills introduced threaten ability to protect workers

A number of bills have been introduced this session in both the U.S. House of Representatives and Senate that would dramatically limit OSHA's ability to do its job of protecting workers' safety and health. Through a portrait of regulatory agencies running amok, proponents of these measures argue that OSHA and other federal agency protections of the public's health and safety are too burdensome.



An excellent flowchart produced by Public Citizen, a national, nonprofit consumer advocacy organization, demonstrates this is far from the truth. The Public Citizen analysis notes that any proposed new government regulation must pass through a long series of steps involving rigorous cost-benefit analysis, public comment, review by the Office of Management and Budget, review by the Small Business Administration, etc.

Perhaps most dangerous among the current legislative proposals is the "REINS" (Regulations from the Executive In Need of Scrutiny) Act, H.R. 10. This Act would turn the regulatory process upside down enabling a single chamber of Congress to veto any government regulation simply by failing to take any action.

Another proposed bill is S.602 (Collins), Clearing Unnecessary Regulatory Burdens (CURB) Act: This bill would add additional layers of requirements to federal agencies in order to issue new regulations including more requirements for analyzing indirect costs. It would also prohibit agencies from even issuing guidance documents without going through an elaborate public comment period.

Visit <http://protectingworkers.org> to find out more about these bills and other legislation currently being considered by Congress.



STATE

Due to the current political climate, several health and safety bills that NYSUT supported have not moved out of committee. This is a two-year legislative cycle, however, and we will list all bills and needed action in the fall newsletter. With your help, we will get needed protections to prevent injury and illness to our members.

Union Sherpas raise global warming issue to new heights

A misstep on this job could mean almost certain death. But the views are spectacular.

Nepal's Sherpas belong to the Union of Trekking, Travel, Rafting and Airline Workers, which "protects Sherpas from exploitation," says International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) General Secretary Sharan Burrow.



Sherpas union member Dorje Khatri planted the ITUC flag on the summit of Mount Everest in late May, symbolizing the trade union movement's commitment to protecting the planet from climate change.

Dorje's union belongs to ITUC Nepalese affiliate the General Federation of Nepalese Trade Unions (GEFONT). On previous ascents to the summit, Dorje has planted the flags of GEFONT and its member organizations, as well as Global Union Federations BWI and IMF. Dorje, 46, has climbed Everest, which is known to Nepalis by its original name Sagarmatha, seven times.

USC News Service, July 2011

