

HEALTH & SAFETY

A NEWSLETTER FOR NYSUT'S HEALTH AND SAFETY LEADERS

Education pays for Long Beach School Employees Association

Joanne Rea, LBSEA president, stands near the portable trailer and diesel gas pump.



In July 2013 Joanne Rea was vice president of the Long Beach School Employees Association and attended the Northeast Regional Summer School for Union Women at Cornell University. She was inspired by the energy of the union sisters attending and loved the whole experience. One class she particularly connected with was a four-day course on health and safety taught by NYSUT Health and Safety Specialist Wendy Hord. Rea returned to Long Beach with a new perspective on her workplace.

“The class made me more aware of the surroundings of myself and my members. Things I wouldn’t have focused on before suddenly became important to me,” said Rea.

This new awareness came in handy after the school year started, when the new transportation supervisor brought in a used portable trailer, painted school-bus yellow, to be used as a training classroom. The trailer was one of three that had previously been used as temporary space for buildings damaged by Superstorm Sandy. At that time, approximately 75 workers had to use one bathroom in the mechanics’ area because the pipes in those trailers froze. The “yellow submarine,” as the drivers call it, was brought in almost a year to the day of the storm and represented a very difficult time for these NYSUT members, some of whom had not yet returned to their own homes.

From her newly honed health and safety perspective, Rea looked at the trailer. It sat on unstable concrete blocks, some of which had been knocked down by a snowplow. The stairs were supported by wood blocks. It was also less than four feet away from the diesel gas pump where the drivers refueled their buses. It didn’t look safe.

Rea voiced her concerns to management, but they didn’t listen. So she took pictures, called Hord and emailed her the photos.

Hord told Rea that the State Education Department had to approve the use of the portable. Hord sent the pictures

Continued on page 2

Continued from page 1

and description of Rea's concern to SED's Office of Facilities Planning, which oversees facility issues and is the code enforcement agency for public schools outside of New York City. SED was unaware the trailer had been brought in and informed the district that they couldn't use it.

Meanwhile, Rea had asked her supervisor if SED had sanctioned using the trailer. The question was not answered, but according to Rea the next training was held in an idling school bus for almost an hour, violating both the federal Clean Air Act and New York state idling laws. Rea is working on getting the transportation department to go back to their former practice of using the drivers' room for training.

If anyone can make sure a safe training space is provided, it's Rea. "Before my health and safety class, I assumed that working for a school district meant that things were up to code and they were following laws. Sometimes they take the easy way out."

Now the president-elect of her local, Rea is excited about using her knowledge from the Union Summer School. She will be assisted by fellow Long Beach SEA member and summer school attendee Aileen Monahan, who will be her vice president.

Rea says that the networking established at the summer school has been terrific and she keeps in touch with some of the women from other unions she met. They share experiences and advice, which has been invaluable.



"This is a great example of a local leader using training and NYSUT resources to

effectively advocate for her members' right to a safe working environment."

**Paul Pecorale,
NYSUT Vice President**

"This is a great example of a local leader using training and NYSUT resources to effectively advocate for her members' right to a safe working environment," said Vice President Paul Pecorale, whose office oversees health and safety issues for the union. "A safe working environment is a right, not a privilege. NYSUT has excellent comprehensive health and safety information and resources for our members."

The 2014 Northeast Summer School for Union Women will be held at Queens College in Flushing, New York July 26 – 31. Visit <http://sps.cuny.edu/events/id/15> for information about the school and to register.

If your local is interested in health and safety training, have your president contact Wendy Hord at whord@nysutmail.org for details on upcoming workshops.

Recognizing and correcting hazards 'Top 10' List

1. Get training and/or educate yourself on workplace hazards. If you think something is wrong, it probably is.
2. Document the problem, and if possible, take pictures.
3. Tell your union rep as soon as possible.
4. Talk to co-workers who may know more about the issue (custodian, nurse, co-worker).
5. Use NYSUT resources for more help and information (staff, informational materials, www.nysut.org/healthand-safety).
6. List your suggestions for fixing a problem and a reasonable time frame to get it done.
7. Approach the appropriate manager about fixing the problem and offer your recommendations.
8. Ask for a formal meeting with management if your first attempt to get help doesn't work.
9. Work together, but tell them what your next step(s) will be if they don't act.
10. Have the union file a complaint with the appropriate enforcement agency if management doesn't respond. When you need to, don't be afraid to use vinegar instead of honey!

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.

President

Karen E. Magee

Executive Vice President

Andy Pallotta

Vice President

Catalina R. Fortino

Vice President

Paul Pecorale

Secretary-Treasurer

Martin Messner

New York State United Teachers

800 Troy-Schenectady Road

Latham, NY 12110

518-213-6000

800-342-9810

Contact: Wendy Hord
Health & Safety Specialist

nysut
A Union of Professionals

June is National Safety Month



Celebrate National Safety Month and bring attention to important safety issues, including: preventing prescription drug abuse; stopping slips, trips and falls; being aware of one's surroundings; ending distracted driving; and summer safety. The 2014 NSM theme is "Safety: It takes all of us," which encourages continuous risk reduction.

The National Safety Council has free online resources to download and print. Membership is not required, but you do need to sign up to access the information.

Visit www.nsc.org/nsm for more information and <https://www.nsc.org/forms/NSMMaterialSignup.aspx> to sign up for materials available free to the public. There are many materials free to the public and additional resources are available to NSC members.

Road work – Help keep our union brothers and sisters safe



Warmer weather means more workers repairing roads and bridges that NYSUT members rely on to get to work every day. How we and our friends and family drive through road work zones can be the difference between life and death.

Members of CSEA and DC 37 (in New York City), work on or near traveled roads in one of the most dangerous environments. In addition to the number of hazards of the industry itself, road workers have to dodge drivers who are sometimes distracted by talking or texting.

National statistics on road work show there is a work zone fatality every 10 hours (2.3 fatalities per day) and there is a work zone injury every 13 minutes (110 per day). For CSEA, 45 members have been killed working on New York's roads since 1983. Almost half of those

were caused by the traveling public.

"Don't Zone Out" is CSEA's campaign to alert the driving public to the dangers road workers face. "Working in work zones is one of the most hazardous jobs in CSEA. The biggest hazard in work zones is the traveling public. Simply slowing down and paying attention can save someone's life," said Janet Foley, CSEA director of safety and health.

Drivers often don't consider that the open road may be someone's workplace. What if someone drove through an office or

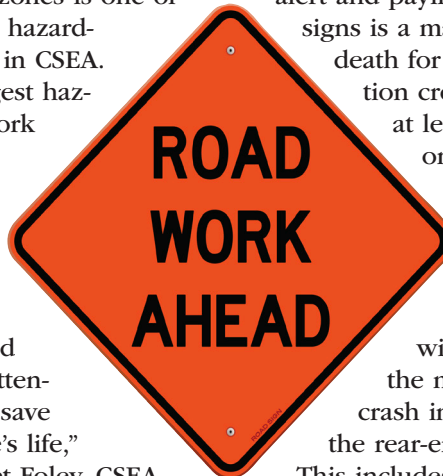
school at 60 miles an hour, the equivalent of 86 feet per second? That's what happens for workers on or near a road. Slowing down in advance of road work, being alert and paying attention to signs is a matter of life or death for road construction crews. Keeping at least two seconds of braking distance between you and the car in front of you will help avoid the most common crash in a work zone: the rear-end collision.

This includes driving past mobile work zones like line painting, mowing and road patching, which can be deceiving since you may not immediately see workers.

While an inconvenience, road work is very important

to improve conditions for the driving public. Late spring begins the busiest time for road work and just like us, highway workers want to return home safely after work each day.

It takes 60 seconds to get through the average work zone. Let's remember our fellow workers, respect their workplace and "Don't Zone Out."



Did you know?

NYSUT offers a host of health and safety resources for members, including webinars, health and safety alerts and other online articles. Access these free resources anytime online by visiting www.nysut.org, clicking on the “resources” link at the top of the page and then the “Workplace Health & Safety” link on the left. Or click here.



WEB RESOURCES



Paint stripping products: safer, less toxic choices

Many paint strippers on the market today contain methylene chloride, a toxic chemical that can cause death when applied in enclosed spaces (like bathrooms and inside tanks). Many alternative paint strippers contain safer, less toxic chemicals – and still get the job done. The California Department of Public Health has developed useful resources. Visit www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/ohb/Pages/methylenechloride for more information.



practices can be seamlessly integrated into the classroom, curriculum and culture of schools, and how they can help transform schools to support the growth and health of all students. Specifically, the toolkit includes concrete models, frameworks, and action steps for school-wide implementation. It also includes guiding questions to support reflection for practitioners looking to make restorative methods part of the fabric of daily life in their schools.

Visit <http://naacpms.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/restorative-practices-guide.pdf> for more information.

Severe weather preparedness resources

March 2-8 was national Severe Weather Preparedness week with a focus on tornadoes. FEMA's Be Ready website has answers to frequently asked questions about tornadoes including: How do tornadoes form? Where is the safest place to shelter? Should I open the windows in my house during a tornado? The web site www.ready.gov/severe-weather has information about other weather emergencies and advice about how to prepare at home and in workplaces.



Fostering Healthy Relationships & Promoting Positive Discipline in Schools: A Guide for Educators

This new toolkit was developed by the Opportunity to Learn campaign, Advancement Project, American Federation of Teachers and National Education Association with the help of a working group of educators and school personnel. The toolkit illustrates how restorative



LEGISLATIVE UPDATES

State

2014-15 Budget Successes!

Safe Patient Handling Act: Included in the state budget, this bill is a version of one supported by NYSUT. This will require covered facilities to establish Safe Patient Handling Committees and develop policies to ensure patient/resident safety during tasks such as lifting, repositioning and transferring. These policies, if implemented at facilities, have the potential to reduce patient and health care worker injuries. However, this law does not require the state Department of Health to approve the policies or ensure they are fully implemented.

Facilities that must comply with this law are hospitals, nursing homes, diagnostic treatment centers, clinics licensed under Article 28 of the Public Health Law, state operated group homes and OCFS facilities.

Governor's budget attempt to gut pesticide information laws stopped: Governor Cuomo's budget proposal eliminated requirements for information on where pesticides are used. Because of fierce advocacy by the environmental and labor committees, which NYSUT supported, these requirements remain in place.

Funding for Pollution Prevention Institute, Interstate Chemicals Clearinghouse and Children's Environmental Health Centers of Excellence is included in the budget. The Interstate Clearinghouse is a 10-state collaboration to compile and share information on chemical hazards and use, along with availability of safer alternatives. The New York State Pollution Prevention Institute (NYSPI) is a statewide research and technology transfer center with a mission to make New York more sustainable through reductions in toxic chemical use, reductions in emissions to the environment and waste generation and the efficient use of raw materials, energy and water. Children's Environmental Health Center money will establish clinical settings, outreach and education about children's health and environmental exposures. The new centers will model New York's existing occupational health center network.

Child Safe Products Act (S. 4614/A. 6328): Will require manufacturers to identify chemicals of high concern based on their inherent hazards and

- Create a priority list of chemicals of high concern found in children's products;
- Require manufacturers to disclose use of priority chemicals in children's products;
- Phase out those priority chemicals in children's products; and
- Participate in an interstate chemicals clearinghouse (IC2).

The act passed the Assembly, was delivered to the Senate and is now in the Senate Conservation Committee.



Bloodborne hazards in science labs

Reports of classroom use of real blood, including that of a teacher and students in a lesson on blood cells, prompted SED to send a memo to district superintendents of public and private schools and school nurses about the need to avoid blood and body fluid exposure in the classroom and science labs.

The memo, sent in March 2014, emphasized that the National Science Teachers Association (NSTA) and the National Association of Biology Teachers (NABT) recommend that artificial blood and fluids available from reputable suppliers be used in place of human blood and other body fluids.

Blood-borne pathogens may transmit diseases such as HIV and hepatitis B and C. There are many school employees who may have exposure to blood or possibly blood-contaminated body fluids. Exposures due to classroom use of blood are rarely addressed in blood-

borne pathogen training. The SED memo is a good reminder of how important it is to avoid contact with blood, regardless of the source.

Universal precautions should always be used whenever dealing with blood and body fluids. To minimize this risk to everyone, the following steps should be followed:

- In lesson plans involving the use of blood, use artificial blood and fluids available from reputable suppliers as recommended by NSTA and NABT. If substitution is not possible, licensed school health professionals should be consulted to make sure the lesson and any instruments or devices that may be used during the lesson comply with OSHA regulations.

- Assume that all blood and/or body fluids are potentially infectious and use Universal Precautions at all times when handling human blood and/or body fluids. This includes barrier use

such as gloves and training for all staff that have a reasonable expectation of coming in contact with blood and potentially blood-contaminated body fluids in the course of their work.

- Always follow the school or district's Exposure Control Plan and make sure it is up to date. The Exposure Control Plan is required by the OSHA bloodborne pathogen standard. It includes tasks, procedures and job titles where occupational exposure to blood occurs, annual training for employees and post-exposure follow-up for employees who have reported an exposure incident.

- Clean and disinfect any equipment intended for use by multiple persons that could be exposed to blood and/or body fluids according to manufacturer's instructions before use by another person. If the manufacturer does not provide specific cleaning and

disinfection instructions, the device must not be shared (see www.cdc.gov/injection-safety/blood-glucose-monitoring.html).

- Never share glucometers and/or other equipment, such as lancets and lancet pens, among people. Although older equipment may have manufacturer instructions for cleaning and disinfection, recent evidence suggests it may not be sufficient to prevent the spread of infection (www.fda.gov/forconsumers/consumerupdates/ucm129955.htm).

More information on bloodborne pathogens, exposure control plans, and additional resources for schools is available on the Statewide School Health Services Center at www.schoolhealthservicesny.com. Search under the alphabetical index for "Bloodborne Pathogens and Exposure Control."

Green grass, safe lawn

Download tips for a perfect organic lawn

Whether you take care of your lawn yourself or have someone else do it, we can help you enjoy a perfect, organic, and completely safe lawn this summer!

The Grassroots Environmental step-by-step guide, *Six Steps for a Perfect Organic Lawn*, written with turf expert Chip Osborne, gives you all the basic information you'll need to grow lush, beautiful grass without any synthetic fertilizers or pesticides. Download it at www.grassrootsinfo.org/gblpindex.html.

Free online lesson in school integrated pest management

The American Clearinghouse on Educational Facilities has posted *School Integrated Pest Management: The Four Laws for Keeping Schools Pest-Free* on its website. The interactive lesson has strategies, the four IPM laws and practical techniques to manage major pest problems in school buildings and on school grounds. Targeted for school employees and interested community members, the lesson is here: http://online.tarleton.edu/ACEF/SchoolIPM3_17_14/.

