

HEALTH & SAFETY

A NEWSLETTER FOR NYSUT'S HEALTH AND SAFETY LEADERS

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Task Force on Health and Safety hard at work

In 2011, the NYSUT Board of Directors confirmed NYSUT President Dick Iannuzzi's recommendations of members to statewide committees. One of these committees is the Task Force on Health and Safety, a permanent group that helps shape NYSUT's health and safety program. The task force has many returning faces along with new ones. They have met twice already to plan the health and safety agenda for the next three years. The biggest job so far has been planning the 2013 Health and Safety Conference, which will take place March 1-2 at the Saratoga Springs Hilton. The task force has spent many hours discussing the conference schedule, workshop topics, keynote speaker

and exhibitor possibilities to make sure this is a high quality event for NYSUT's health and safety activists.

"We're very excited about the conference. The task force is a great group with energy and commitment to improving the health and safety for all NYSUT members," said Dianne Loonan, chair of the task force and president of the Watertown Education Association. The task force will continue to advocate for legislation that protects NYSUT members and the public they serve. In the next legislative session, two bills are priorities — one to include K-12 schools in the existing workplace violence prevention regulation and the other to establish maximum indoor temperatures in schools and colleges.



Other issues loom on the horizon. In New York, there is an effort to significantly slash workers compensation benefits and nationally, there has been an effort to require congressional approval before any new regulations go into effect, which, if passed, could significantly limit federal agencies' ability to make rules that protect the public. The task force will continue to monitor these and other state and federal bills.

Tell it like it is: Your voice, your future

NYSUT Vice President Kathleen Donahue urges NYSUT members to log on to www.nysut.org and take part in a new campaign. "Tell it like it is" tells SED to stop the fixation on standardized testing and urges more

investment in education. At the recent SRP Leadership Conference, Donahue said, "I urge you to add your voice to this important conversation by going to our homepage, where you will see, very prominently displayed, the link for "Tell it like it is."

Visit nysut.org and click the "Tell it like it is" logo. You'll be able to create and send an email to Commissioner John King and the Board of Regents. Let them know how current

testing practices negatively impact students, and what needs to be done to get student assessment and teacher evaluations right. Tell SED and the Regents to stop the obsession with standardized testing and start investing in student learning.



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

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2013 Health & Safety Conference has timely theme: 'prevention, preparedness, response and recovery'

Register now for March 1-2 event

The devastating impacts of Superstorm Sandy and the tragic Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting remind us how important workplace health and safety is for our members and the public we serve. The 2013 Health & Safety Conference planners have ensured many of the workshops offered have content related to these events.

The Friday night opening dinner's invited speaker is U.S. Department of Labor Solicitor General and former New York State Department of Labor Commissioner Patricia Smith.

The Unsung Hero Award (see below) will also be awarded that night. Friday afternoon extended workshop selections

cover emergency planning, strategic planning for committees, gang awareness and Part 1 of CPR/AED/Basic First Aid. Saturday sessions include wake-up yoga or tai chi, mold and fungi, health and safety 101, pest and bug control, workplace bullying and engaging the disruptive student.

"I encourage locals to send their health and safety activists to this conference. Having the latest information about health and safety issues is an important first step in advocating for healthy and safe workplaces," said NYSUT Vice President Kathleen Donahue. Come join fellow



health and safety activists and leaders to learn, share and connect! Register online by visiting www.nysut.org/healthandsafety.

Unsung Hero Award nominations open!

The Unsung Hero Award recognizes a health and safety activist for his or her efforts to improve the workplace for members, students and clients. NYSUT members may submit the name of a NYSUT member who embodies the spirit of this award. Members may also submit nominations for non-member allies who have contributed signifi-

cantly to improving the health and safety of a NYSUT-represented workplace. Submit your nomination today and help us recognize a deserving activist at our statewide conference on March 1.

Nominations must be postmarked by Feb. 8, 2013. Download the form at www.nysut.org/healthandsafety.

Give thanks for safe turkeys this holiday season

According to the National Council for Occupational Safety and Health blog, as you celebrate the holidays, you should give thanks for your turkey — free from scabs, salmonella and other dangerous flaws. Next year's turkey may be different.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has proposed a new rule that would allow poultry processors to increase line speeds for poultry inspection lines by more than five times — requiring poultry plant workers to inspect a bird every one-third of a second.

NCOSH joined other organizations to urge the USDA to withdraw the proposal. Now it's time to make your voices heard. The USDA's proposal is not yet finalized.

Phyllis McKelvey, who worked as a USDA inspector for more than 10 years, is petitioning the USDA on Change.org to stop expansion of a new pilot program she says is already letting bile, feces, pus and scabs into the nation's poultry products.

"I have seen contaminated chickens go down the line, but inspectors like me were able to stop them before they reached consumers," said McKelvey. "If you knew an inspector had just one-third of a second to inspect a chicken for a whole host of problems, would you eat it?"

For more information, visit www.change.org/petitions/scabs-pus-and-feces-in-chicken-usda-keep-it-off-my-plate.

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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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Study links poor ventilation with decline in decision-making

From Berkeley Lab News Center

A recently published study indicates that indoor concentrations of carbon dioxide (CO₂) considered within a normal range was linked with significant drops in people's decision-making performance.

The study, funded by SUNY, was conducted by researchers

from the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory in California and from SUNY Upstate Medical University. The researchers reported that, as the median CO₂ concentration increased from 600

to 2,500 ppm, decision-making decreased significantly. The results were not expected because previous studies had looked at impacts with much higher levels of CO₂ where cognitive effects were thought to start.

While more and larger studies are needed, this one showed substantial decision-making reductions at levels that are commonly found in schools and colleges. The magnitude of CO₂-associated deterioration in decision-making performance ranged from 11 percent to 94 percent.

According to the Lab Center News website, "On nine scales of

decision-making performance, test subjects showed significant reductions on six of the scales at CO₂ levels of 1,000 parts per million (ppm) and large reductions on seven of the scales at 2,500 ppm. The most dramatic declines in performance, in which subjects were



rated as 'dysfunctional,' were for taking initiative and thinking strategically."

Levels of CO₂ above 2,000 ppm indicate a ventilation problem. At this level many building occupants will per-

ceive air as being stuffy and people may feel lethargic. The main indoor source of CO₂ is human expiration.

Though the study looked at decision-making vs. learning, there are clear implications for classrooms.

"What struck me is how this study may change how to interpret CO₂ levels in indoor environments," said Greg Siwinski, certified industrial hygienist for the Central New York Occupational Health Center. "This certainly implies that enough outdoor air, i.e., good ventilation, is necessary for comfort and performance."

Employers must post injury/illness summaries

Remember that PESH and OSHA regulations require that, beginning Feb. 1, all public employers must post a summary of the total number of job-related injuries and illnesses that occurred during 2012. Employers are only required to post the summary SH Form 900.1 or OSHA Form 300A (private sector), not the SH 900 log or OSHA 300 log (private sector). The summary must be posted from Feb. 1 to April 30. Employees and their unions also have the right to examine the full injury and illness logs at any time.

It is a good opportunity for health and safety committees to review employer logs to help determine where injuries and illnesses are occurring and develop strategies to reduce or eliminate hazards.

Employers with no recordable injuries or illnesses in 2012 must post the form with zeroes on the total line. All summaries must be certified by an agency official.

The form is to be displayed in a common area wherever notices to employees usually are posted. A copy of the summary must be made available to employees who move from worksite to worksite, such as construction employees and employees who do not report to any fixed establishment on a regular basis.

Copies of the forms and regulations can be downloaded at: www.labor.state.ny.us/workerprotection/safetyhealth/DOSH_PESH.shtm (for public sector) and www.osha.gov/recordkeeping/index.html (for private sector).

Newtown school tragedy brings re-evaluation

In the wake of the horrible tragedy of the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting in Newtown, Conn., NYSUT members across the state are reminded of the tenuousness of life.

Workers, especially in K-12 schools, are thinking about safety protocols where they work and whether they are enough to prevent or limit a similar situation. Previous similar tragedies — at Columbine, Virginia Tech and Northern Illinois University — have been the catalyst for voluntary efforts, laws and regulations to ensure proper planning and response for violent events. All brought increased activity around preventing and, especially responding to a violent event like a shooter on campus.

Many employers work on plans immediately after an event, but then lapse into complacency in the years afterwards. In order to be effective, drills must be well-designed, well-practiced and constructed around serious situations.

For K-12 schools in New York, the Safe Schools Against Violence in Education (SAVE) Act has been in place since 2001. It was the result of NYSUT's five year legislative effort to improve school safety. SAVE requires district and building-level safety teams to develop, review and update school safety plans. Laura Sahr, SED's liaison to the State Office of Emergency Management says, "The most important thing schools can do is to collaborate and practice with local emergency responders."

Workers' compensation system help available online

If you are hurt or made ill on the job, navigating the workers' compensation system can be confusing and difficult. A newly launched website, Workers' Comp Hub www.WorkersCompHub.org can help. It's a joint project of the National Economic and Social Rights Initiative and the National Council for Occupational Safety and Health.

Workers' Comp Hub offers basic information for injured and ill workers in all 50 states to help them navigate the complex workers' compensation system. It also has regular news updates and a guest blog feature every month with injured and ill workers, policy makers, practitioners, labor leaders, academics and others sharing strategies and solutions that better meet the needs of injured and ill workers.



EPA's green chemistry resource includes school science safety



The green chemistry and engineering content of EPA Region 2 (New York, New Jersey) pollution prevention website has information for schools. This includes an energy efficiency webinar, a school chemical cleanout campaign, and science classroom safety information from the National Science Teachers Association and the Connecticut Science Teachers Association. The updated page also includes a report that provides a general introduction to green chemistry and engineering, and provides example activities and capabilities that illustrate current implementation of green chemistry and engineering in Region 2.

Visit www.epa.gov/region02/p2/gc_ge_main.html for more.



Children exposed to two chemicals in plastics have elevated risk of asthma-related airway inflammation

From the Mailman School of Public Health

Children exposed to diethyl phthalate (DEP) and butylbenzyl phthalate (BBzP) — chemicals commonly found in plastics and personal care products — have an elevated risk of asthma-related airway inflammation, according to researchers at Columbia Center for Children's Environmental Health (the Center) at the Mailman School of Public Health.

The results were published online in the *American Journal of Respiratory and Critical Care Medicine*. Of the 244 children aged 5 to 9 in the study, all had detectable levels of phthalates in their urine, although these varied over a wide range. Higher levels of both phthalates were associated with higher levels of nitric oxide in exhaled breath, a biological marker of airway inflammation. The association between BBzP exposure and airway inflammation was especially strong among children who had recently reported wheeze, a common symptom of asthma.

Visit the center's website at <http://ccceb.org> for more information about environmental exposures and children's health.



Worker-inspired safer chemicals database launched



Workers wanting safer workplaces now have a new tool to help them: the ChemHAT (Chemical Hazard and Alternatives Toolkit) database. The free database is available at www.chembat.org and was designed in consultation with workers who deal with hazardous chemicals every day. ChemHAT database allows you to quickly search 10,000 commonly used chemicals and see their acute and chronic health effects. In the near future, the database will provide the ability for users to identify safer alternatives to the chemicals they are using.



Calculate your district's pest management budget and risk

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension's School Integrated Pest Management (IPM) offers an online IPM risk calculator to help schools estimate pest risk and IPM costs. The calculator includes an online questionnaire, leading the user through an IPM inspection.

The tool can help identify a pest problem area and



what it will take to repair or replace it. IPM coordinators enter items needing repair or replacement, and cost per item. This allows an accurate picture of long-term costs and benefits.

Try it out at www.ipmcalculator.com.