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NYSED Office of Facilities Planning Newsletter



Carl T. Thurnau, P.E. Issue #119 - February 2015

Facilities Planning: A Brief History

The responsibilities housed within the NYSED Office of Facilities Planning vary from the review of architectural and engineers plans and specifications to fiscal matters associated with capital construction to health and safety issues such as indoor air quality. Staff are consistently challenged by the complexities of emerging technologies which are incorporated into 21st century schools, and yet the establishment of Facilities Planning was much more humble.

New York State law has provided oversight for public schools since the eighteenth century. During the first half of the nineteenth century, the physical condition of many schools were reported by locally appointed County Superintendents of Schools as being poor. A survey conducted in 1842 found that most schools even lacked outhouses. School Commissioners (now known as district superintendents) began approving school building projects in union free districts in 1864, however this responsibility shifted to the

Commissioner of Education in 1904 under the "School Building Act". The function of reviewing school facility projects was initially carried out by NYSED's former "inspections division." This subsequently led to the creation of a separate School Buildings and Grounds Division in 1915—now known as the Office of Facilities Planning.

In a 1917 Education Department report, *School Buildings and Grounds*, it was stated that "...as the highest and most important function in which the home, the community and the state unite, the school building and grounds of every locality should be a concrete expression of its highest ideals, a translation into visible form of the best thoughts of the best minds, the outgrowth and consummation of all that it can conceive and do for the physical, intellectual and spiritual needs of its youth."

Significant numbers of new schools were built during the 1930s as a result of school district centralization

and federal Depression Aid; as well as during the "baby boom" era of the 1950s and 1960s. Facilities Planning is now in its second century, however our focus remains the same: we strive to ensure safe, healthy, comfortable, and exceptional educational facilities which promote effective learning.

As the authority having jurisdiction (AHJ) for the enforcement of the State Building Code in all public schools (outside of New York City), we take our work very seriously, however we also depend on the expertise and experience of design professionals, school facility managers, and administrators across the State to implement this mission in schools. Thank you.

Sources:

www.regents.nysed.gov/about/history.html

School Buildings and Grounds. Volume 3 of the Eleventh Annual Report of the State Department of Education. Albany: U of the State of New York, 1917. Print.

Is there a topic you would like addressed in the Facilities Planning Newsletter? Please email suggested topics and comments to: laura.sahr@nysed.gov

A Difficult Lesson —Not To Be Repeated

You're the director of school facilities and, as in many schools, storage space is at a premium. Some items are easily stored, while others are so large creative solutions are the order of the day. This may be the case if you're trying to store extra folding tables and benches. If they're the types of tables and benches that fold-up into a small cavity in the wall—your problem is solved—or that's what you believe.

If your school has the table/bench units that fold-up and store in the wall, it is absolutely essential that the units containing an operable mechanism which securely fastens the unit to the wall. If the mechanism is broken—this must be repaired immediately.

In January 2015, a seven-year old child was playing indoor soccer in a space in a New Jersey school with such table/bench units folded into the wall. According to the news report, the child "...was crushed after kicking a ball toward

a wall where benches and folding tables were stowed into the wall...when he ran over to retrieve it, an unsecured bench, which weighs about 108 pounds, fell on top of him. The impact caused severe head trauma. Its not clear if (the child) had touched the bench before it fell."

Medical attention was provided immediately when "...an off-duty cop who was coaching for the soccer game ran over to give (the child) CPR. The child was taken to a hospital, but died from his injuries before arriving at an emergency room."

See: www.nbcnewyork.com/news/local/New-Jersey-School-Table-Bench-Fall-Kills-Student-New-Milford-287920971.html

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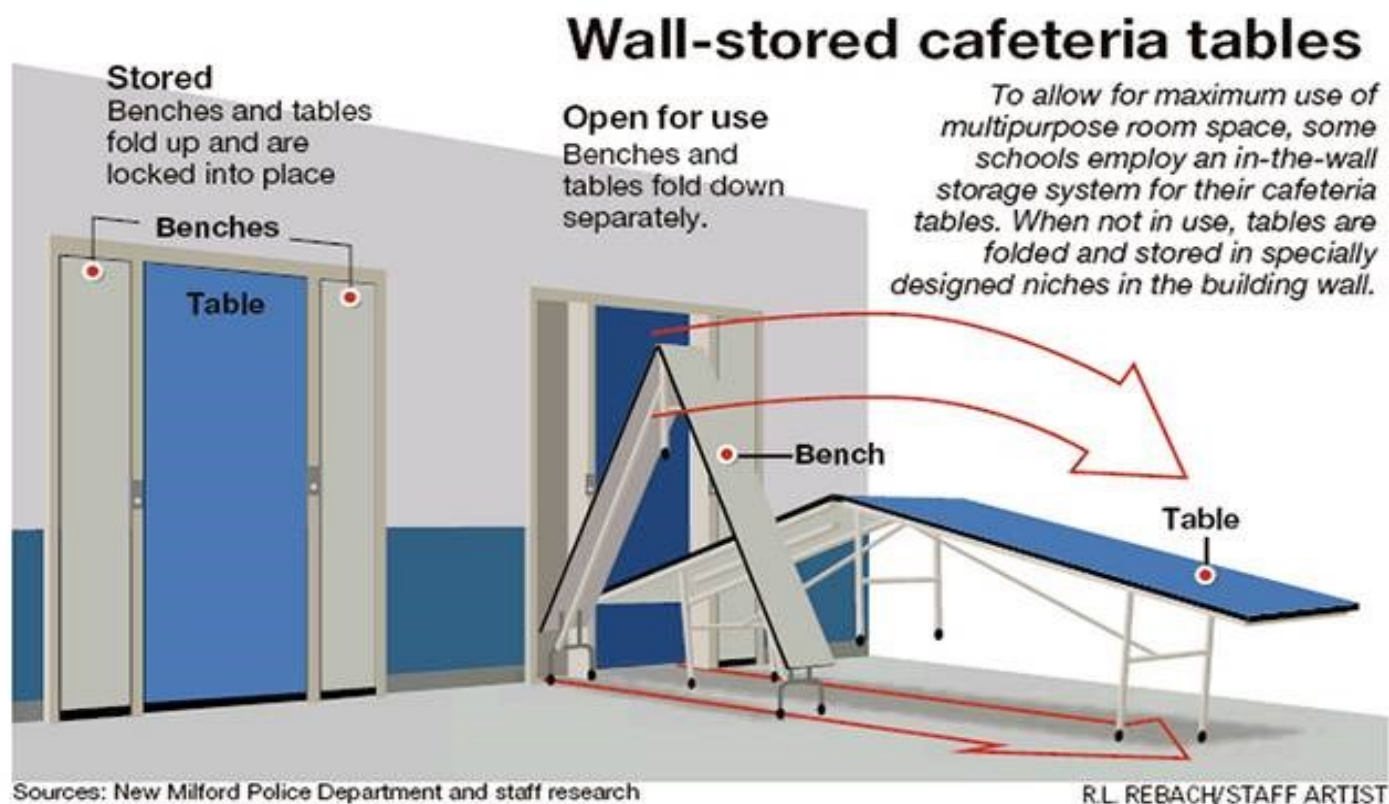


Diagram from:

www.northjersey.com/news/folding-bench-s-deadly-fall-in-new-milford-puts-school-districts-on-alert-1.1189112

A Difficult Lesson —Not To Be Repeated (cont.)

In addition to the table/bench units that fold into the wall, the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) issued a warning in January 2012 about mobile folding table/bench units that are not bolted to the wall. See: www.cpsc.gov/PageFiles/122335/5062.pdf.

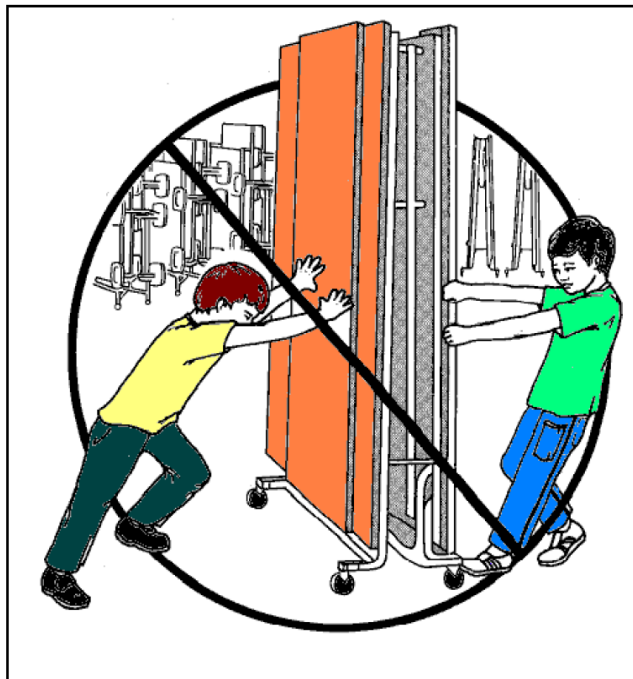
With regards to the mobile folding tables (which may weigh up to 350 pounds), the CPSC reports that they've received "...reports of several deaths and injuries to children in schools when these tables tipped over while being moved in their folded positions...Most of the accidents happened during after-school or non-school sponsored activities. The tables overturned when the wheel or bottom edge of the table apparently hit a child's foot or when the child attempted to ride on the table while it was being moved."

The CPSC recommends implementing the following rules:

- ✓ Do not allow children to move folded tables. Only adults should move them.
- ✓ Do not allow children to play with or on folded tables.
- ✓ Keep children away from the tables while they are being moved. Once the tables start to fall, it is difficult to stop them.

For more information on this topic, please see:

www.cpsc.gov/PageFiles/122335/5062.pdf



Indoor Temperature Requirement Reminder

The "Property Maintenance Code of New York State", section 602.4 for "Occupiable work spaces", requires that "indoor occupiable work spaces be supplied with heat during the period from September 15th to May 31st to maintain a temperature of not less than 65°F (18°C) during the period the spaces are occupied." The only exceptions are for processing spaces (coolers or freezers) and vigorous physical activities areas (gymnasiums).

According to the Department of State, minimum temperatures must be maintained in the "indoor occupiable work spaces" during the school day when students, faculty, and the public are present, **as well as** during the time when cleaning and maintenance staff are working during their normal work hours.

In other words, the temperature must be maintained at a temperature of not less than 65°F (18°C) when the building is being cleaned during the evening.



Electronics Recycling: Follow-Up Information

The January 2015 Facilities Planning Newsletter included information concerning the recently enacted **New York State Electronic Recycling and Reuse Act** prohibiting the disposal of certain types of electronic equipment in landfills or through regular trash pickup.

Since then the question of how and where electronics can be disposed of has been raised. The State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) has posted the following guidance on their web site to assist the public (including schools) on how to comply with the law—see: www.dec.ny.gov/chemical/66872.html.

The following are excerpts from DEC's guidance:

- ✓ **Manufacturer Take-Back Program** - Manufacturers are required to accept their own brand of electronic equipment for free recycling. They are also required to accept one piece of electronic waste of any manufacturer's brand if offered by a consumer with the purchase of electronic equipment covered by the law of the same type by a consumer. An example of this scenario is: If you purchase a new ABC-branded television and wish to recycle your old XYZ-branded television, you may use any free and convenient acceptance method provided by either ABC's or XYZ's manufacturer electronic waste acceptance program.
- ✓ **New York State Electronic Waste Collection Sites** - Registered Electronic Waste Collection Sites exist throughout the State. A complete list of the sites is available on the DEC web site at www.dec.ny.gov/chemical/66872.html or enter your zip code on the following site to locate the collection sites near you—www.greenergadgets.org/Recycle-Electronics.aspx.

- ✓ It is advised to call ahead before going to an electronic waste collection site since any specific site listed may not accept your particular type or brand of equipment. If the collection site is not affiliated with a manufacturer's acceptance program, private entities may be charged a fee to recycle the equipment.

NOTE: School districts, municipalities and government entities located in New York State may not be charged for the recycling or reuse of electronics covered by the law—unless the vendor provides a “premium service.”

According to the law, “premium services” include services above and beyond the reasonably convenient acceptance methods defined in the Act. This includes equipment and data security services, refurbishment for reuse by the consumer, and custom services such as at-home collection (other than mail back programs), data wiping, and specialized packing and preparation for collection.

Questions or concerns related to electronic waste recycling may be directed to DEC at: 518-402-8706 or ewaste@dec.ny.gov.



Marking an Anniversary at the EPA

This year marks 20 years since the EPA established its “**Children's Environmental Health Agenda**.” In 1995, the EPA released its **Policy on Evaluating Risk to Children** which directed the agency to explicitly and consistently take into account environmental health risks to infants and children in all risk characterizations and public health standards set for the United States. It was stated that “it is the policy of the....EPA to consider the risks to infants and children consistently and explicitly as a part of risk assessments generated during its decision making process, including the setting of standards to protect public health and the environment.” It was also noted that “when it comes to their health and development, children are not little adults.”

Additional information on the EPA's “**Children's Environmental Health Agenda**” may be found at: www2.epa.gov/children/history-childrens-environmental-health-protection-epa.

Sports Fields and Integrated Pest Management (IPM)

It may still feel like winter, but spring is right around the corner—and its never too early to start planning.

The Community IPM Program at Cornell University has developed web site with a specific focus on sports field management.

The site offers in-depth guidance on how to create and maintain safe playing fields, while addressing issues including (but not limited to) soil health, overseeding, mowing, watering, field drainage, and - of course—IPM.

This is an excellent **FREE** resource for anyone who may use a school sports field or is responsible for maintaining sports fields. The site includes information directed to the following audiences:

- ✓ School Administrators
- ✓ Directors of School Buildings and Grounds
- ✓ Athletic Directors and Coaches

Please visit this web site at:

<http://safesportsfields.cals.cornell.edu>



New On-Line Fire Reporting System Update

We are still on-schedule to roll-out the new on-line public school fire reporting system during the 2014-15 school year. Staff from the NYSED Office of Information Technology Services the Office of Facilities Planning are in the process of testing and finalizing the various layers of the new system, as well as developing detailed instructions on how to navigate the system.

Access to the new system will only be available via the secure SEDDAS portal. The following are some critical points to keep in mind as we move closer to the actual launch:

Two distinct processes will be included in the new system.

1. School districts and BOCES must verify and certify all buildings that exist in the current fire safety system. This includes each building's name, street address (no P.O. Box #), and primary use. Although the superintendent may designate an individual to verify the dis-

trict's information, the superintendent is the only person permitted to certify that information. An additional step in the verification process for instructional buildings includes confirming which SEDREF institution(s) each building houses. In other words, what school or schools are located in that specific building.

2. Following the completion of the verification and certification process, the annual fire safety report information may be entered into the system. As with the other step the superintendent may designate an individual to perform the data entry with the fire report findings (provided to the school district by the fire inspector), however the superintendent is the only person permitted to certify that information.

More information will follow as we approach the new system's launch. In the meantime, the existing system will remain in place.

Facilities Planning: True or False



Managing a school facility requires a skilled professional adept at understanding and interpreting a wide variety of requirements. This article addresses issues which school facility directors often need to address. This is a regular feature in the Facilities Planning newsletter.

True or False?

The State Education Department is the only New York State agency with oversight responsibility for public school facilities.

False.

NYSED is the authority having jurisdiction (AHJ) for building code enforcement in New York State schools (outside of NYC), however other State agencies also have oversight responsibilities in public schools facilities, including **but not limited to** the following.

NYS Department of Environmental Conservation

Has oversight for a wide range of facility matters ranging from petroleum bulk storage tanks to pesticide applicators and applications.

See: www.dec.ny.gov

NYS Department of Health

Has oversight for public health rules ranging from water quality to asbestos.

See: www.health.ny.gov

www.health.ny.gov/environmental/phone.htm

www.wadsworth.org

NYS Department of Labor

Enforces federal OSHA worker protection rules for public employees (PESH) and Code Rules through its Division of Safety and Health.

See: http://labor.ny.gov/workerprotection/safetyhealth/DOSH_INDEX.shtm

For a complete list of all New York State agency web sites, see: www.ny.gov/agencies.

True or False?

It is possible to eliminate all mold spores from school facilities.

False.

According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), "...it is impossible to eliminate all mold and mold spores in the indoor environment. However, mold growth can be controlled indoors by controlling moisture indoors...Mold spores waft through the indoor and outdoor air continually." Guidance on controlling mold and moisture in schools is available at the following sites:

www.epa.gov/mold/mold_remediation.html

www.cdc.gov/niosh/docs/2013-102/pdfs/2013-102.pdf

Questions From the Field:

This section will address an actual question which has been raised by a school facility professional in the field.

The former principal of our school recently passed away and his will included a request that his body be cremated and his ashes scattered on school grounds. Is there any reason why we can't comply with his request?

Needless to say this question was a new one for Facilities Planning, however not wanting to disappoint anyone, we immediately began researching the answer. Our first step was to access the NYS Department of State Division of Cemeteries' web site (www.dos.ny.gov/cmt/index.html) in order to learn about the disposition of cremated remains—a topic no one in our office had ever researched.

It was through their "Crematory FAQ" section, that we located what we thought was the answer (www.dos.ny.gov/cmt/faq-cremation.html). The following question/answer seemed to provide the guidance we were looking for:

Q: What do I do with the cremated remains after I receive them back from the crematory?

A: Final arrangements for cremated remains may take many forms. One option is burial of the cremated remains in a cemetery. Another option is placing the remains in an above ground niche or columbarium....Some cemeteries also have a scattering area for cremated remains....Another alternative is to keep the remains at home. In this case, the person keeping the remains should plan for where the remains will go after he or she dies.

A third alternative is to scatter the remains at sea or on private grounds with the permission of the landowner. Scattering on public land may be prohibited or may be allowed only by written permit. You must check with the appropriate authority before scattering cremated remains.

Based on this guidance, as well as a conversation with the Assistant Director of the Division of Cemeteries, it was determined that the local school board would need to make an official decision or board resolution whether or not the ashes could be scattered on public school property.

We were fairly concerned that some members of the public, parents, and faculty/staff may be uncomfortable with the thought that the ashes would be scattered on school property—however as the authority owning that public land, it was left in the local school board's hands to make the final determination.