



Office of Facilities Planning Newsletter #54 – August 2004

155.5 Reminder for September:

School begins during the beginning of September. Those construction projects that are not completed need to implement additional measures for the Commissioner's 155.5 Regulations for Safety During Construction.

While school is in session measures to now consider include separating construction from occupied spaces, proper exiting, and the remaining requirements. Every construction project has these requirements built into them prior to approval by Facilities Planning. With this reminder we wish to implore you to be sure these additional items are set up prior to the students and staff returning to school. This reminder is especially pertinent for any project that was planned for completion before school begins if the construction has not been completed.

For additional information please review our Newsletter #41 article which addressed Commissioner's 155.5 Regulations and the Exiting Plan During Construction.

https://www.p12.nysed.gov/facplan/Newsletter/Newsletter_41.html

Clarification on Five-Year Plan Summary:

Since the requirement to submit an Executive Summary of the Five-Year Plan with each project submission became effective July 1, 2004, we have had numerous questions regarding exactly what information is required. Please see the clarification we have posted on our web site regarding the Executive Summary at:

https://www.p12.nysed.gov/facplan/five_year_plan/5yr_summary_instructions_072604.html

Annual Visual Inspections:

The fall is approaching and many school districts are preparing to begin their Annual Visual Inspections. The observation below indicates that some areas and conditions of buildings are not being closely examined.

During the design of capital projects in two different school districts it was discovered that steel columns on concrete piers in crawlspaces had rusted to the point of complete failure (sheared, laterally displaced, and vertically settled several inches.) It appears that both situations had been subject to significant ground water in the crawl spaces for many years. In neither case was the situation identified in the Building Condition Survey or Annual Visual Inspection.

These were both classic late-fifties/early sixties buildings, of which we have so many across the state. Access to the crawl spaces was awkward which may be why the issue was not identified earlier (this is not an overnight-occurring problem!). Please look closely at your facilities. There can be serious issues in hidden spaces (like crawl spaces, natatorium ceilings, etc.).

We would like to thank Dave Kuckuk for bringing these to our attention.

Upholstered Furniture:

We have recently been receiving inquiries regarding the use of upholstered furniture within classrooms and other student occupied areas. Though there are no formal rules or laws within the SED Manual of Planning Standards or the New York State Uniform Fire and Prevention and Building Code, the following guideline was adapted by the Board of Regents in 1994.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR IMPROVING THE ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY OF SCHOOLS

Although focused on teaching and learning, education must also address the need to maintain a safe, secure, and healthy school environment. The capacity of children to learn is impeded if their school environment contains elements which are hazardous to their health. The State Education Department and educators throughout the State of New York have a responsibility to assure the school community and the public that, based on the best available knowledge, school buildings are safe, healthy, clean and in good repair.

In December 1994, the New York State Board of Regents adopted the following guiding principles developed by the Regents Advisory Committee on Environmental Quality in Schools:

1. Every child has a right to an environmentally safe and healthy learning environment which is clean and in good repair.
2. Every child, parent, and school employee has a "right to know" about environmental health issues and hazards in their school environment.
3. School officials and appropriate public agencies should be held accountable for environmental safe and healthy school facilities.
4. Schools should serve as role models for environmentally responsible behavior.
5. Federal, State, local, and private sector entities should work together to ensure that resources are used effectively and efficiently to address environmental health and safety concerns.

The SED strongly recommends against the using of upholstered furniture or carpeting brought in from staff or student homes. There becomes an issue of air quality and contamination. This could, also, become a problem with new furniture and carpeting installed within a classroom. With porous surfaces there is no control as to the contamination that may be present in or on such items. Dust mites are a common problem found in carpeting and upholstered furniture. This would require frequent vacuuming with a HEPA filter vacuum to control the growths. Also, upholstered furniture tends to "grab on" anything it comes in contact with. Meaning any contamination on children's or staff's clothing could possibly be left behind. This could include allergy producing contaminants. Depending on air quality in the areas of use, mold could also become a problem. Mold could reside in the furniture or carpet and not be detected for a period of time due to the pile of the carpet or the fabric of the furniture. In the mean time, staff and students come in contact with the contaminants.

An Index of our Newsletters is available on our web site at <https://www.p12.nysed.gov/facplan/NewsLetters.htm>.

If you would like to have this Newsletter sent directly to you by e-mail, please send your e-mail address to Joe Levy at jlevy@mail.nysed.gov

Please continue to send in your comments and requests. If you have a subject you would like addressed, feedback on the material you read, input or general comments we are happy to hear from you.