

## Office of Facilities Planning Newsletter Update #16 – June 2001

### Get to Know Us Better:

We would like you to meet Alicia Merges. Alicia loves children, and it's a good thing she does since she is a mother to five and grandmother to six of them! If you saw her, it would be hard to believe that she is a "grandma"--she is red-haired and vivacious--but the things she enjoys doing most reflect her youthfulness. Her favorite activities include dancing, singing, rollerblading, and swimming. In our office her main responsibility is to assign review numbers to projects which have been put into the system for review. She also helps out with processing LOI's, doing negative declaration letters for SEQRA, answering the phone, greeting visitors, opening mail, putting project review numbers on change orders, and just being a "Jack of all trades."

### Air Intake Bulletin:

New York State Uniform Fire Prevention and Building Code section 1004.2(b) states:

1004.2(b)(1) Air intake and exhaust openings shall be designed, located, and installed so as not to constitute a hazard or nuisance, and so as to prevent the possibility of fire, smoke, fumes, or foreign matter being drawn into the system.

As Code Enforcement Officers having jurisdiction over public schools, the Office of Facilities Planning often deals with "sick buildings". Numerous school evacuations and closings occur because of fumes being brought into the buildings from the exterior. We have recognized that many problems are associated with air intake openings located "out of sight" at loading docks, over or behind dumpsters, on the roof with exhaust and sewer vents, and at vehicular areas such as streets, the bus loading area, and parking lots. These locations must be monitored and changes must be made to improve indoor air quality. Sometimes just shutting doors or windows, requiring truck or bus motors to be turned off while parked, or moving dumpsters has been enough to improve the situation. However, persistent complaints have lead to additional research and new problems have come to our attention.

Ground level and roof level air intakes on all sides of buildings have proven to be another problem area. Since these air intakes are in close proximity to exterior horizontal surfaces they pose a constant maintenance problem that is largely ignored. These low level air intakes have proven to be the source of various contaminants entering the building. These include the smell of and actual residue from pesticides, fertilizer, organic matter, dead animals, and animal feces. In addition, feathers, floating seedpods, pollen, soot, water vapor, water, mold, leaves, chewing gum wrappers, and other manufactured materials have caused closure of many bird screens. 100% blockage has been reported with the above materials being trapped at or inside the wall line. Snow and the resulting ice damming have also caused problems both in shutting off the fresh air supply and in causing flooding.

Ground level conditions change over the years. Grass and grass clippings, bushes, mulch, and plantings are problems as they grow and must be maintained. These "foundation plantings" also cause access problems for maintenance personnel who must lie on the ground to clean or repair these low air intake louvers and bird screens. Stone beds are not a solution since organic matter rots and plugs the drainage paths. These desirable looking stone areas have actually been the source of mold odors that were sucked into buildings.

As a preventative measure, the area around ground level air intakes must be designed and maintained to allow maintenance from the exterior. To eliminate the possibility of water ponding and unplanned growth in the vicinity a hard surfaced well-drained area under all new air intakes that are within two feet of ground or roof level is required. At ground level the hard surface should extend three feet beyond the edges of the opening and from the wall. It is recommended that districts monitor existing air intake areas and take corrective measures as needed.

### **155.5 Regulation section must be paper-clipped:**

Beginning July 1, 2001 all projects will be required to have **one single specification section or sub-section addressing the Commissioner's 155.5 Regulations**. This specification section or sub-section will address these requirements **only**, nothing else should be in this section. **This section must be paper-clipped** when you send it to SED. Please be sure to review the regulations and the information posted on our web page. Here is a hyperlink to the information on our web page. <https://www.p12.nysed.gov/facplan/articles/Checklistofitemsrequiredby155.html>

### **Building Condition Survey Report Electronic Submission Update 6/4/01:**

The BCS is back on-line and operational. Due to a concern that the system may not handle large numbers of on-line users simultaneously, we have defined a schedule for completion by districts. Please refer to correspondence mailed to every school superintendent dated 6/4/01, which identifies when each school district or BOCES should enter survey information for their district. Please see our updated BCS material on the web site at:

<https://www.p12.nysed.gov/facplan/BldgCondSurv.htm>

### **Asbestos in Gypsum:**

This was passed on to us through Patrick E. Cochrane of the N.Y. State Association for Superintendents of School Buildings and Grounds

The Public Works Department of the NSA has notified US Government facilities of a potential safety hazard involving gypsum board installation when using sheetrock made in Mexico. This information was provided by the instructor of an Asbestos course as it was being taught to the PW employees.

Apparently, Mexico is now allowed (under the NAFTA agreement) to import sheetrock/drywall board into the United States. However, it became a big problem in Corpus Christi when it was discovered that the Mexican sheetrock contained asbestos that is used in their manufacturing process for their drywall board. The Mexican sheetrock product is sold at popular retail stores such as Lowes or Home Depot (where some of contractors buy their construction materials). The Asbestos course instructor cautioned that before purchasing gypsum board, we should check to make sure that it says "U.S.A. Gypsum" (which does not contain asbestos).

The New York State Office of General Services followed up on this information. They said the gypsum in question is probably not being shipped as far north as our part of the country. But is may be worth keeping an eye on the situation anyway.

If you would like to have this Update sent directly to you by e-mail, please send your e-mail address to Joe Levy at [jlevy@mail.nysed.gov](mailto: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.