

Office of Facilities Planning
Newsletter #55 – September 2004

Manual of Planning Standards Update:

We are currently reviewing the Manual of Planning Standards and are seeking comments from architects, engineers, and other interested parties. A good reminder of the purpose of the Manual of Planning Standards comes from the 1925 School Buildings and Grounds: Laws, Rules, and Information Relating to School Building Construction pamphlet.

"This pamphlet is issued for the information of architects, boards of education and trustees of common school districts. It contains such portions of the Education Law as related to school building construction, rules adopted by the Board of Regents, and information and directions to facilitate the preparation and approval of plans and specifications for the construction of school buildings. Much unnecessary trouble and delay in the examination and approval of plans and specifications could be avoided if the requirements for school construction were better understood and observed. In the following pages, briefly stated, will be found legal requirements and points to be given special attention in the preparation of plans and specifications."

If you have suggested items for us to consider please submit them to Elizabeth Freund at efreund@mail.nysed.gov.

Catastrophic Structural Failure:

If you are not aware of the **Roof Collapse at Washingtonville CSD**, please review the following links we have placed on our web site. Deputy Commissioner James Kadamus issued a letter to BOCES District Superintendents of Schools, Superintendents of Schools, Nonpublic Schools, and BOCES Health and Safety Officers dated August 20, 2004 about this incident. The letter and pictures of the collapse are available for viewing at

https://www.p12.nysed.gov/facplan/BCSItems/Structural_advisory_letter.html, and

https://www.p12.nysed.gov/facplan/BCSItems/WashingtonvilleCSD_roof_collapse_082304.html.

Last month we included an article in the Newsletter for the fall Annual Visual Inspection and included information about inspecting columns that had rusted through. The roof collapse at Washingtonville was predominantly the result of roof joists that had been nearly rusted through. Visual inspections that reveal rust on steel should indicate closer inspections are necessary. This may identify corrective work that could proceed before failure. If this roof collapse happened while the students were in the classroom it may have resulted in the loss of lives.

Rescue Compliance:

The Office of Facilities Planning receives many inquiries from concerned citizens, taxpayers, and parents about school safety and health issues and the condition of public schools. In attempting to address these concerns, we often advise them of the requirements of the 1998 RESCUE regulations, including requirements for safety

during construction and maintenance activities, building condition surveys, annual visual inspections, comprehensive maintenance plans, five-year capital plans, and school facility report cards.

There are several opportunities to get this information to the public to demonstrate the effort you make to safeguard children and to demonstrate how seriously you take this responsibility.

The Department recommends that information about RESCUE requirements be advertised in newsletters or annual mailings such as the school calendar or posted on school district websites with an appropriate heading.

This is a valuable resource to the community. Districts who regularly demonstrate their commitment to a healthy and safe school environment help to create a positive school environment.

Reminder - Minimum Temperature in Schools:

We have had so many calls regarding this subject in the past that it is worth the time to add this reminder. The minimum temperature in occupied buildings is **65 degrees** and it must be maintained from **September 15th through May 31st**. This is a requirement of the Property Maintenance Code of New York State, Section 602.4. Any previous references to not providing heat until October 15th are no longer acceptable. This may seem to be in the past, but buildings with ongoing construction projects must also meet this requirement for occupied portions of their buildings.

SHPO, SEQR, and Bond Authorization:

For the purposes of planning Capital Construction Projects, we have previously discussed the requirement for providing Facilities Planning with a letter from the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) if any portion of the building you are planning construction in is 50 years or older. The DEC SEQR short and long form EAF's include historical and archeological questions. As part of SED's application process we specifically require documentation demonstrating coordination with SHPO. This assures that SHPO has been consulted regarding any proposed construction so as to protect New York's historic buildings and archeological sites.

If ample information can be provided to SHPO during the SEQR environmental assessment process, the initial contact with SHPO could result in their final approval. This could be the case for most projects since ample information regarding the proposed project is often available during the SEQR environmental assessment process. If ample information is not available for SHPO then it will be necessary to contact SHPO twice, once during the SEQR environmental assessment process and again when a final program description can be provided to SHPO.

SHPO must be contacted before the SEQR determination can be completed. The SEQR determination **MUST** be made before the school district can seek bond authorization through voter approval. If this sequence is not followed then the bonds could be contested and nullified. **Please**, contact the SHPO **before** the SEQR determination is made. Complete the SEQR determination **before** seeking a bond referendum.

By contacting SHPO during the SEQR environmental assessment process, districts will find it easier to study alternatives for their projects to solve SHPO's concerns, when there are any. If SHPO is not contacted, districts that impact historic resources may have eliminated project alternatives that would reduce or eliminate impact to historic resources. If the SEQR determination is completed and the district obtains a successful bond referendum, they will find it difficult to study alternatives to a project to alleviate SHPO's concerns.

See Newsletter #27 from May 2002 for more information about **SHPO and SEQR**.

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.