

Office of Facilities Planning Newsletter #67 – September 2005

Get to Know Us Better:

Whenever we have new members join our staff we try to introduce them right away. Recently we had Rachel Zanchelli join our support staff. Rachel is a new employee with SED and the State of New York. She said she is looking forward to new adventures and experiences working for the State of New York. Rachel graduated from Cossackie-Athens Central and attended Columbia-Greene Community College.

In her time off Rachel enjoys spending time going to concerts, shopping, and she's a wrestling fan too! She is a family person, lives at home with her family, and has an eight-year-old sister, Annie, whom she adores. She says her parents, Cathy and Joseph, "have given us kids the best life that they can". Rachel also loves the time that she spends with her fairly large family whenever possible. She also teaches children's religion as well as being a girl-scout leader and volunteering with the ARC. Rachel plans to eventually get a college degree in Special Education Teaching.

SEQR Clarification:

As you know, Commissioner's Regulation 155.9 entitled "Environmental Quality Review," was amended effective November 15, 2000. The change removed language requiring the Education Department to automatically act as lead agency for all public school construction projects. School districts assumed the role of lead agency for the environmental review of their projects. As a result of this change, we developed the SEQRA Clarification Form (FP-SCF). It was intended to clarify for us that the work encompassed in a proposed project was previously cleared through the SEQRA process when we were acting as Lead Agency for the public school districts and BOCES prior to September 1, 2001.

Since four years have passed since the lead agency responsibility for the SEQR process has been transferred to the districts and BOCES, we will no longer be accepting the SEQRA Clarification Form indicating that the Education Department was the lead agency for SEQR. Since all projects where SED was the lead agency are now completed, all current and future projects should have the SEQR process conducted with the district or BOCES acting as the lead agency.

Information regarding the SEQR process is available on our web site for your reading enjoyment at www.emsc.nysed.gov/facplan/.

Post Fire Inspection Meetings:

It has come to our attention that there are many instances where a post inspection meeting is not being held between the fire inspector and the school board. Commissioners Regulation 155.8(d) and Education Law Section 807-a(5)(e) require this meeting to be held to address the non-conformances and a plan for remediation. This meeting must be held even if minor non-conformances were corrected immediately.

Education Law, Section 807-a, also requires the school district to make public notification that the fire inspection has been completed and is on file in the district office and available for "Inspection by all interested persons".

And remember, as we indicated in Newsletter #36, Education law S 807-a additionally provides detail for fire chief notification and who may represent the fire department. The fire chief notification should be done in a written message to the fire chief. A public notice in a newspaper does not suffice for this requirement.

State Education Law 408-b Reminder:

You've had an emergency in your school, the building-level emergency plan has been activated, and local emergency responders have arrived. Every minute counts as they enter the building, but do these responders know the layout of the school?

State Education Law §408-b (effective March 19, 2001) requires every public and nonpublic school to provide copies of school building plans and specifications to local fire and law enforcement officials. The goal of this law is to ensure that fire and law enforcement agencies have quick and easy access throughout a school building during an emergency.

Plans and specifications in the law do not mean construction documents; rather they mean schematics and/or blueprints. The following items should be highlighted in these documents.

- Locations of all exits
- Barriers, gates, or other impediments that may affect exiting or access
- Chemical storage, flammable storage, maintenance areas, and chemistry labs
- Confined spaces
- Utility shut-off for electric, gas, etc.
- Remote shut-offs for labs, kitchens, etc.
- Fire alarm panel and any annunciator panels
- Location of the fire department connections for standpipe and/or sprinkler systems
- Any installed fire protection systems and their locations - such as hood suppression systems, computer room systems, auditorium/stage sprinklers, etc.
- Fire hydrant locations
- Underground gas pipelines, underground storage tanks, etc.

Local fire and law enforcement agencies may provide schools with additional guidance. In addition, schools should meet with the local fire and law enforcement agencies to discuss how best to share this information – such as electronic or hardcopy. Remember – the time to meet the fire chief for the first time is NOT when the building is on fire.

For further information on Education Law 408-b, contact your local fire and law enforcement agencies or the State Education Department at 518-474-3906, Dave Clapp (dclapp@mail.nysed.gov) or Laura Sahr (lsahr@mail.nysed.gov). For additional guidance on §408-b please see: https://www.p12.nysed.gov/facplan/SED_law_408-b_guidance_062801.html.

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.