

## RESOURCES

### Your NJEA UniServ Office

- Region 1 Vineland  
856 696 2670 *Cape May, & Cumberland counties*
- Region 2 Woodbury  
856 628 8650 *Gloucester & Salem counties*
- Region 3 Voorhees  
856 782 1225 *Camden County East*
- Region 4 Camden  
856 964 2800 *Camden County West*
- Region 5 Moorestown  
856 234 2485 *Burlington County*
- Region 6 Galloway Twp.  
609 652 9200 *Atlantic County*
- Region 7 Toms River  
732 349 0280 *Ocean County*
- Region 8 Lawrenceville  
609 896 3422 *Mercer County*
- Region 9 West Long Branch  
732 403 8000 *Monmouth County*
- Region 11 Edison  
732 287 4700 *Middlesex County North*
- Region 12 Monroe Twp.  
609 860 0771 *Middlesex County South*
- Region 13 Flemington  
908 782 2168 *Somerset & Hunterdon counties*
- Region 15 Cranford  
908 709 9440 *Union County*
- Region 17 Parsippany  
973 515 0101 *Morris County*
- Region 19 West NY  
201 861 1266 *Hudson County North*
- Region 20 Jersey City  
201 653 6634 *Hudson County South*
- Region 21 South Orange  
973 762 6866 *Essex County*
- Region 23 Emerson  
201 265 6200 *Bergen County East*
- Region 25 Hasbrouck Heights  
201 292 8093 *Bergen County West*
- Region 27 Wayne  
973 694 0154 *Passaic County*
- Region 28 Stanhope  
973 347 5717 *Sussex & Warren counties*
- Region 29 Hamilton Square  
609 689 9580 *Higher Education*

### New Jersey Healthy School Facility Environments

[www.state.nj.us/health/healthyschools](http://www.state.nj.us/health/healthyschools)  
Access to the online resources of seven New Jersey state agencies and two federal agencies on such issues as indoor air quality, mold, hazardous substances, and construction dust and noise.

### EPA Healthy School Environment Resources

<http://cfpub.epa.gov/schools/index.cfm>  
Healthy School Environment is a gateway to online resources to help facility managers, school administrators, architects, design engineers, school nurses, parents, teachers, and other staff to address environmental health issues in schools.

### New Jersey Education Association (NJEA)

180 West State Street, PO Box 1211  
Trenton, New Jersey 08607-1211  
609 599 4561  
[www.njea.org](http://www.njea.org) For Healthy & Safety, click on Issues

### National Education Association (NEA)

1201 16th Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20036-3290  
202 833 4000  
[www.nea.org](http://www.nea.org)  
<http://www.neahin.org/> click on Health & Safety

### PEOSH

#### NJ Dept of Health and Senior Services

(Health hazards complaints)  
PO Box 360  
Trenton, NJ 08625-0360  
609-984-1863  
[www.state.nj.us/health/eoh/peoshweb/](http://www.state.nj.us/health/eoh/peoshweb/)

### PEOSH

#### NJ Dept. of Labor and Workforce Development

(Safety hazards and discrimination complaints)  
PO Box 386  
Trenton, NJ 08625-0386  
609-633-3896/800-624-1644  
[http://lwd.dol.state.nj.us/lssse/employer/Public\\_Employees\\_osh.html](http://lwd.dol.state.nj.us/lssse/employer/Public_Employees_osh.html)

### New Jersey Work Environment Council (WEC)

(Labor, community, environment coalition)  
142 West State Street, Third Floor  
Trenton, NJ 08608  
609-695-7100  
E-mail - [info@njwec.org](mailto:info@njwec.org)  
[www.njwec.org](http://www.njwec.org)



  
HEALTH-  
SAFETY

New Jersey Education Association   
**HEALTH & SAFETY**

For Custodial  
& Maintenance  
Employees

## LIFTING

Custodial and maintenance employees hold positions that involve frequent manual lifting and pulling that can have damaging health effects.

**Hernias** can be caused by straining to lift an object due to increased pressure in the abdomen.

**Back Problems**, although common among the general population, can be more severe and longer in duration among those who perform heavy work. Strain on the back caused by frequent lifting can lead to changes in the structure of the spine. These problems can be minimized by ensuring that employees are matched to jobs for which they are physically suited and that lifting is done in the proper manner.

### What You Can Do

- Keep the work environment safe. Floors should never be slippery. Trafficked lanes should be clear of objects.
- Employees should be encouraged to never strain against a load. While they may have the muscular strength to overcome an excessive load, such straining could lead to devastating long-term effects.
- Employees should rest when they are tired. Tired muscles are less well coordinated and the employees may not be able to safely perform even light tasks.
- The use of mechanical lifting devices, such as fork-lifts, hand trucks, conveyors, lifting tackle, hoists and cranes should be used to assist the worker whenever possible.
- Two employees should perform lifting and carrying which is too difficult for one.
- Employees should be offered training in exercises for lower back pain.

## ASBESTOS

Custodial and maintenance employees often risk on-the-job contact with asbestos. It has been used in approximately 3,000 products including:

- Fireproofing and insulation in buildings.
- Insulation for pipes and boilers.
- Putties, caulks, paints, and cements.
- Friction products, such as clutch facings and brake linings in vehicles.

**Asbestos containing material (ACM)** is dangerous if the asbestos fibers are released. Once they are floating freely in the air, asbestos fibers can be inhaled and cause disease.

Hard asbestos-containing material such as vinyl floor tile does not generally create exposure problems. However, fibers can be released if the material is sanded, cut, ground or disturbed in some other way. Therefore, any material that contains asbestos has the potential to release fibers and to be hazardous.

### How to Know If a Product Contains Asbestos?

The only way to know if material contains asbestos is to send a piece of the material to a qualified laboratory.

### How Does Asbestos Enter the Body?

The most common way for asbestos to enter the body is through breathing. Asbestos can also enter the digestive tract while eating or smoking in a contaminated area. Asbestos does not pass through the skin.

### How Should Asbestos be Handled?

In 1986, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) issued the Asbestos Hazard Emergency Response Act (AHERA), which covers all K-12 schools and regulates the inspection, abatement, and management of ACM. The EPA and the New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services (NJDHSS) recommend a proactive management program whenever ACM is present. NJDHSS also recommends periodic inspections to make sure in-place asbestos is in good condition. Removal is required during building demolition, renovation or maintenance.

Testing and removal of asbestos is a highly specialized job. Only properly trained employees should be involved in asbestos testing and removal. If you believe asbestos is present in a work area, do not handle the material. Ask the district to have it tested. Should you have concerns about how an asbestos removable project is being handled, call NJDHSS (609-631-6749).

## CHEMICAL EXPOSURE

In the United States, there are over 60,000 chemicals in use in the workplace. Public employees in NJ are covered by PEOSH and the Worker and Community Right to Know Act of 1985 that gives workers the right to know about chemical hazards in their workplaces. Custodial and maintenance employees are exposed regularly to a variety of these chemicals. Some chemicals are more dangerous than others - try to substitute less dangerous chemicals and always wear protective gear.

### What substances are covered?

OSHA has a minimum list of about 500 chemicals that are regulated. About 200 of these may cause cancer.

### MSDS - the Material Safety Data Sheet

An MSDS is a fact sheet on a single chemical or a mixture of chemicals. It is prepared by the manufacturer or the importer and given to your employer along with the product. During the work shift, you and your union representative have the right to see the MSDS for any products containing hazardous chemicals.

An MSDS must contain very specific information:

- Identity of the hazardous ingredients
- Workplace exposure limits
- Chemical characteristics
- Fire and/or explosion hazards
- Health effects
- Routes of entry into the body
- Potential to cause cancer
- Precautions for safe handling
- Control measure
- Emergency first aid procedures
- Name, address, and phone number of the manufacturer or distributor
- Date the MSDS was prepared

Training on hazardous substances should be provided annually; when your job assignment changes; and when a new chemical is introduced into your work area.

## WHAT YOUR ASSOCIATION CAN DO

- Form a health and safety committee to monitor conditions in the workplace.
- Negotiate health and safety contract language.
- File grievances about unsafe conditions using existing contract language.
- See that training is provided through inservice days.
- Ensure that your district complies with the N.J. Public Employee Occupational Safety and Health (PEOSH) Act; Worker and Community Right to Know Act.
- Ensure that your district has properly inspected the district's buildings and tested them for presence of asbestos. Ask for copies of any reports drawn up to meet the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's requirements.
- Review the PEOSH annual log of reported injuries and illnesses.
- Work on substituting less toxic or hazardous substances.
- Work with parent and community groups to eliminate and/or prevent hazardous conditions.

*We would like to thank the New York Committee on Occupational Safety and Health for their assistance on this project.*

## IF YOU ARE INJURED

- Contact your association representative immediately. Your local or the NJEA UniServ office can help you with Workers' Compensation. You are entitled under state law (N.J.S.A.18A:30-2.1) "...to full salary without loss of sick days for up to one year..." and all medical treatment.
- Record the time of the incident and document the facts.
- Report all injuries to the school nurse and complete an accident report.
- Ask for medical diagnosis and treatment.
- Fill out an incident report, if appropriate.