

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
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 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.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/

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

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
www.njwec.org

VIOLENCE

Secretaries often work with students whose behavior puts them, other students, and staff at risk of harm. Secretaries share in the responsibility for the safety of children. That responsibility extends to protecting or reducing the severity of potential student injuries, including those from fighting or assaults. Physical intervention is not required if it would create a physical danger to you. However, common sense and reasonableness require the use of steps such as:

- Calling for assistance, sending someone for help, or calling 911 if the altercation is out of control.
- Dispersing the crowd. By removing the audience, the motivation to fight may be reduced.
- Removing or pushing aside items from the area. This will reduce the risk of further injury due to falls. It will also keep students from using these objects as weapons.

You can protect yourself and minimize the risk of assault through your local association by:

- Seeking inservice training on topics such as:
 - Intervening and resolving conflicts safely.
 - Reducing staff victimization.
 - Handling angry parents.
 - Weapons awareness.
- Conducting a worksite analysis to identify existing hazards for workplace violence.
- Seeking the installation of alarms and other security devices.
- Joining or helping to form an association health and safety committee to work on these issues by:
 - Insisting the district follows procedures outlined in state law (N.J.S.A. 18A:37-2.1) – Assaults upon school employees and state law (N.J.S.A 18A:37-2.2) – Assaults with weapons upon school employees.
 - Ensuring that any school safety plan puts the full responsibility on the district for protecting employees, and involves administration and law enforcement.

Ergonomics is the study of the interaction of employees and the equipment and tools with which they work. Technological advances have led to more intensive computer work for many secretaries. Some spend most of their workday sitting in front of a computer screen. This can have damaging health effects.

Back/Neck Problems can be caused by sitting for long periods of time. The stress of leaning over printouts and paperwork, sitting in an uncomfortable chair and spending long hours in one position leaves many secretaries with aching, tired backs. Ensuring that secretaries are provided with foot rests and the chance to move around and rest their hands and arms rather than sitting in one position at a keyboard all day can minimize these problems. Short breaks throughout the day can vary the pace of the work and prevent strain injuries. Secretaries can be rotated among tasks that require using different motions or muscles, and their jobs can be reorganized in ways that create more rest or variety.

Carpal Tunnel Syndrome and other repetitive stress injuries are caused when the same hand and wrist movements are repeated day in and day out. The excess strain causes tendons to swell and press on the main nerve of the hand. This persistent irritation of the nerve can result in pain, numbness, and dysfunction not only in the hands and wrists, but may extend up to the forearm and elbow as well. This problem can be minimized if secretaries are provided with adjustable equipment. The keyboard, computer screen, chair and documents should all be able to be modified to suit individual needs.

Eyestrain, fatigue, and headaches can be caused when computer screens are incorrectly positioned. Screens should be at least 28 inches away from the user. The top of the screen should be at eye level or slightly lower. Different adjustments may be needed if bifocals are worn. Either mounting adjustable arms to the wall or the use of adjustable stands can achieve this.

What You Can Do Strive to fit the job to the person, not the person to the job.

Secretaries should never be required to work at computer screens for long, uninterrupted periods of time.

Work should be planned so that there will be breaks or changes in activity.

Secretaries should be offered eye tests before they start work on a computer and once every three years thereafter.

Wearing monofocal glasses instead of bifocal or trifocal glasses can prevent strain. Some people may need a special pair of glasses just for computer work.

Work stations need to be evaluated in order to determine if changes are necessary.

INDOOR AIR QUALITY

Secretaries spend most of their workdays in school buildings and offices. The World Health Organization estimates that approximately 30 percent of all buildings have an indoor air quality (IAQ) problem. Much research and attention has been focused on a whole host of indoor air contaminants and stressors in buildings. Formaldehyde, radon, bacteria, fungi, carbon monoxide, hydrocarbons, particulates, nitrogen oxides, ozone, fiberglass, tobacco smoke, temperature, humidity and poor ventilation top the list. Any of the aforementioned may be a cause of IAQ problems.

Symptoms associated with IAQ problems may include eye, nose, throat, and upper respiratory irritation, skin irritation or rashes, chills, fever, cough, chest tightness, congestion, sneezing, runny nose, muscle aches, and pneumonia. Illnesses associated with IAQ problems include asthma, hypersensitivity, pneumonitis, multiple chemical sensitivity, and Legionnaires' Disease.

How can IAQ Problems be corrected and/or prevented?

- Ensure an adequate outside air supply and that the ventilation system is balanced so that it operates at its original design specifications.
- Eliminate or control known and potential sources of chemical and microbial air contamination.
- Opening windows, when possible, is also a simple way to increase the flow of fresh air.

What can be done if the air quality is unacceptable?

Through your local association:

- Conduct employee interviews to obtain pertinent information regarding what symptoms are being experienced, how many employees are affected, when they are affected, where they work, what they do, etc.
- Review building operations and maintenance procedures to determine when and what type of chemicals are being used during cleaning, floor waxing and stripping, painting, gluing, pesticide spraying, roofing operations, renovation and construction activities, etc. Also determine when deliveries occur since idling vehicles generate exhaust. New carpeting, upholstered furniture, partitions, etc. may give off chemical vapors for several months.
- Conduct a walk-through inspection to evaluate possible sources that may contribute to IAQ complaints.
- Inspect the HVAC system, window air conditioners, office dehumidifiers, etc., in order to determine if the systems are working properly and are in good condition.
- Review the building blueprints of the duct work and ventilation system to determine if the system is adequately designed.
- Check compliance with the PEOSH Indoor Air Quality (IAQ) Standard.

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 regarding unsafe conditions using existing contract language.
- See that training is provided through inservice days.
- In cases involving violence, insist that the police be contacted immediately.
- Assist you in filing the Vandalism, Violence and Substance Abuse reports, assuring that the district accurately reports incidents to the Department of Education.
- File and keep accurate copies of incident reports. Review them annually and analyze how each incident was handled by the administration.
- Ensure that the district complies with the N.J. Public Employee Occupational Safety and Health Act (PEOSH) and review the PEOSH annual log of reported accidents and incidents.
- Work with parent and community groups to eliminate and/or prevent hazardous conditions.

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.