

Safety Tips

Don't Bring Chemicals in from Home and We will All
Breathe Easier



Many environmental factors can affect the health of children and employees. One way to improve the health of the indoor environment at work is to minimize the amount of toxic chemicals in products used in schools and offices.

Why It Matters

- Environmental sensitivities in people are becoming more prevalent. Many children and adults have asthma and allergies, which when triggered by contaminants in the air and surrounding environment can make it difficult to breathe. This can lead to additional health problems; which can lead to absenteeism; which can interfere with the learning process and the ability to work.
- Indoor environments affect all occupants; however, children are even more vulnerable than adults to environmental hazards caused by chemical products. Children are more susceptible because they are smaller, have developing organs, and breathe more air per pound of body weight. They are closer to the ground where chemical vapors often pool and they may additionally ingest chemicals through hand-to-mouth action and licking behaviors. Adverse exposures during childhood may have a lifetime impact.

What You Must Do

- To reduce the risks to the health and safety of students and staff, **DO NOT BRING CHEMICAL PRODUCTS INTO WORK FROM HOME.**
- Clean using only the approved all-purpose green cleaner that will be provided to you by your head custodian upon request. Where necessary, staff will also be provided with the BOCES approved disinfectant. Disinfectant should only be used in targeted areas that require disinfection.
- Cleaning and disinfection products will be in properly labeled spray bottles. The Safety Data Sheets are available in the custodial office.

Why You Should Not Bring Cleaning Products In From Home

- New York State requires that schools use only approved environmentally sensitive green cleaning products.
- Typical consumer products brought to school by staff members are not New York State approved green cleaning products, even when they are labeled “Green”. Many products that are marketed as “Green” are greenwashed. In other words, their environmental claims are false or unsubstantiated.
- The New York State Right-To-Know Law and the OSHA Hazard Communication Standard require that specific information be provided to employees on the chemical products in the workplace. These facts are provided on labels and on Safety Data Sheets (SDS, formerly known as MSDS – Material Safety Data Sheets). Nassau BOCES does not have the SDSs for products brought in from home and does not know the sufficiency of their labels.
- Nassau BOCES uses only New York State approved green cleaning products and appropriately selected disinfectants. Nassau BOCES has the SDSs for all products it supplies for use and ensures the containers of these products are properly labeled.
- Products brought in from home may be incompatible with Nassau BOCES products, which can cause hazardous chemical reactions when they are used at the same time.

Use The Right Product For The Task

- Proper cleaning with an all-purpose product effectively reduces most germs on surfaces and is all that is usually needed. Very often disinfecting is not necessary. Disinfectants by their nature are toxic. They should only be used when and where absolutely necessary.
- Make sure you read and follow the directions and precautions for safe use on the label.
- When using a disinfectant, be aware that surfaces should be cleaned prior to using it.

What About Deodorizers?

- **CLEAN DOESN'T HAVE AN ODOR.**
- Fragrances, air fresheners, and deodorizers cover up problems, they don't resolve them.
- The use of deodorizers and air fresheners is discouraged by New York State because they add chemicals to the environment. They are asthma triggers in sensitive individuals.
- If odors are lingering in the bathroom, there may be a problem with the exhaust fan. Ask your head custodian to have the bathroom exhaust fan checked and, if necessary, fixed.

What About Art Supplies?

- Make sure all art supplies are labeled "AP" by the Art & Creative Materials Institute (ACMI). Although they are not necessarily non-toxic, they are certified to have "no materials in sufficient quantities to be toxic or injurious to humans or to cause acute or chronic health problems", so they are a better choice than products without the seal.
- Avoid products that bear DANGER or WARNING signal words on their labels. The least hazardous products do not need a signal word.

What You Can Do To Help Keep Your Building Safe, Clean And Healthy And Lessen The Need For Chemical Cleaners

- Use walk-off mats to wipe your feet as you enter the building.
- De-clutter your classroom or workspace as much as possible. It is difficult to clean a cluttered classroom and clutter makes it hard to detect water damage, which can lead to mold growth. Clutter creates places for pests to hide and nest leading to pest problems. Also, a cluttered classroom can be distracting to children.
- Eliminate dust catchers and pest attractors by storing projects, materials, supplies and, especially, any food in clear containers with tight fitting lids.
- Where food is allowed in the classroom, clean up spills and crumbs quickly.
- Do not bring in new or used (donated) upholstered furniture and rugs into school.
- Make sure the chemical products in your room are properly labeled and are not accessible to students.

- Report signs of pests, mold or odors to your principal or head custodian.
- Leave your room ready-to-clean by custodial staff at the end of the day.

Maintaining a healthy learning environment is an important part of ensuring that students receive the best possible educational experience.

Reducing toxic chemicals in products used in schools and offices benefits both children and staff, particularly those with environmental sensitivities.

DISCLAIMER:

This Safety Tips Sheet is being provided for educational purposes only and is intended as general information for Nassau BOCES staff about how they can help to maintain healthy indoor environments in Nassau BOCES facilities. It is not intended to imply fault or negligence on the part of any employee. It is the law, policy, and intent of Nassau BOCES to provide a safe and healthful workplace. However, the basic responsibility for safety and health rests with all BOCES employees. The measures contained herein can help employees to ensure the safety and health of students and staff.

Although the information and recommendations contained in this Safety Tips Sheet have been compiled from sources* believed to be reliable, the Office of Safety, Health and Security makes no guarantee as to the correctness, sufficiency or completeness of such information or recommendations. Other or additional safety measures may be required under particular circumstances.

*For more information on Healthy Schools visit:

Healthy Schools Network - Coalition for Healthier Schools Back To School 2014 Tool kit:

<http://healthyschools.org/coalitionactionkit.html>

EPA IAQ Tools for Schools Program: www.epa.gov/iaq/schools

For more information call the Safety Hotline 396-2400.