HealthySEAT

Healthy School Environments Assessment Tool

Overview

EPA has developed a unique software tool to help school districts[1] evaluate and manage their school facilities for key environmental, safety, and health issues. The *Healthy School Environments Assessment Tool* (HealthySEAT) is designed to be customized and used by district-level staff to conduct completely voluntary self-assessments of their school (and other) facilities and to track and manage information on environmental conditions school by school. In addition to powerful software that can be used by districts to track any facility issues it chooses, EPA has also included critical elements of all of its regulatory and voluntary programs for schools, as well as web links to more detailed information. Districts and others can download HealthySEAT at no cost from the EPA web site. HealthySEAT is meant to be loaded and used on district computers; once it is downloaded from the EPA web site, HealthySEAT is yours to customize and use as you see fit. There are no reporting requirements and no obligation to use the checklist EPA has provided.

Improve the Health, Safety, and Performance of Students and Staff

There are approximately 120,000 public, private, charter, and tribal schools in the United States, and many of them contain hazards that may pose risks to children and staff. The guidance included in HealthySEAT can improve the health of students and staff by ensuring that all potential environmental and safety hazards in schools are being properly managed. Examples of school environmental hazards include chemical releases, pesticide exposures, flaking lead paint, mold and other indoor air quality problems, and damaged asbestos-containing building materials.

HealthySEAT will help school districts identify and correct hazards *before* they result in:

- health problems in students and staff such as asthma attacks, lead poisoning, and other chemical exposures;
- productivity and performance losses in students and staff;
- school closures due to spills, accidents, or other preventable environmental, health and safety issues;
- costly building clean-ups;
- regulatory enforcement actions by state or federal agencies;
- community concern and resource-draining media attention.

In addition, HealthySEAT will help school districts:

- Collect the kind of school- and hazard-specific data necessary to make a compelling case for needed renovation, repair, and maintenance dollars.
- Demonstrate to the community that your district is committed to the health and safety of children and staff.

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*EPA is using the term "district" to broadly describe any institutional system for managing multiple schools, whether they are public, private, tribal, charter, or some variation. While HealthySEAT is primarily geared toward K-12 school facilities, it may also be useful for colleges and universities as well as other types of buildings.

What does HealthySEAT Include?

HealthySEAT includes:

- **A Web Page.** School districts, states, tribes, and others can download HealthySEAT at no charge and obtain future updates. Visit www.epa.gov/schools.

- **A User's Manual.** Step-by-step instructions are provided for customizing and using HealthySEAT.

- **Tracking Software.** The tracking software uses a Runtime version of *Microsoft Access* and is self-contained. Districts will not need to purchase new software. An installation wizard will install HealthySEAT on any district Windows-based computer. Districts can install HealthySEAT on their district network server if they wish; security controlled access allows multiple users from multiple locations without compromising data.

  The software will help districts to manage all aspects of a district-wide assessment program, including generating letters to individual schools pre-and post assessment visit, tracking the status of facility conditions and corrective actions school-by-school, and creating and generating reports for district use. From within the tracking software, the district will generate and print its own:

  - ▸ **Customized Inspection Checklist.** A customized inspection checklist (as well as the Guidebook, below) will be generated for the user, once she/he decides which hazards the district chooses to track in its assessment program by simply clicking appropriate boxes in the customization screens. All aspects of the tool can be easily customized by school districts to reflect the programs and requirements specifically applicable to their schools. Districts choose which hazards to integrate into their own assessment programs, and can modify all of the content as they see fit. The tool is designed so that Districts can assess and track a virtually unlimited number of facility conditions, including non-environmental issues from bathroom cleanliness to emergency response plans, if it so chooses.

  - ▸ **Customized Guidebook.** Districts will be able to print a more detailed customized Guidebook that provides additional guidance on each of the hazards the district has selected for inclusion on its checklist for use by the assessor as well as other school district staff.

How is HealthySEAT Organized?

The HealthySEAT software has three primary components:

Customize for District – Allows the district to fully customize the tool for district use, including adding its own name and district logo, facilities, assessors, and contacts for remediation, as well as tailoring the content to district policies, programs, and priorities. The district can also tailor the prioritization scheme included with the tool, customize letters, and manage security features, among other administrative functions.

School-Specific Assessment Information – Allows the district to enter and store information about every assessment conducted at individual schools, track the status of every recommendation, and generate customized letters and reports to individual schools pre- and post-visits.

Reports/Output Menu – Users can select from a variety of report options that will organize and extract information from the database such as Assessment Findings by School, Recommendations by Topic/Subtopic, etc.

While HealthySEAT is designed to allow full customization of the content by school districts, the software comes pre-loaded with a checklist that covers a wide array of issues that school districts may wish to assess for each of their schools.

The checklist included in HealthySEAT is organized by the **physical areas of the school** to be assessed, the

issue-specific topics and sub-topics for each area of the school, and specific **assessment actions** that represent the positive conditions that an assessor would look for in each area.

Physical Areas of School	
Central Office	Indoor Athletic Facilities
Classrooms	Attics, Mezzanines
Halls, Stairwells	Mechanical Rooms
Restrooms	Clinics
Custodial Closets	Grounds
Science Rooms and Laboratories	Playgrounds
Vis., Ind. Arts, Voc. Education Rooms	Outdoor Athletic Facilities
Home Economics Rooms	Building Exterior
Computer / CADD Rooms	Roof
Music Rooms	Entrances and Exits
Auditoriums	Break Rooms
Cafeterias	Copy Rooms
Library/Media Center	

Topics
Construction and renovation
Chemical management
Energy efficiency
Hazardous materials
Hazardous waste
Health, safety, and injury prevention
Indoor air quality
Moisture/mold control
Non-hazardous waste
Outdoor air pollution
Pest control/Integrated Pest Management
Portable/relocatable classrooms
Ultra-violet radiation
Water (drinking-, waste-, storm-, and -efficiency)

In addition to information on EPA programs, HealthySEAT also includes information on health, safety, and injury prevention, including:

- National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) comprehensive Safety Checklist Program for Schools, which contains recommendations as well as detailed checklists on Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) regulations which may be applicable to schools;

- Centers for Disease Control (CDC), Division of Adolescent and School Health (DASH) recommendations based on the CDC/DASH School Health Index; and

- Department of Education Safe and Drug Free Schools Crisis Management program.

How is HealthySEAT Intended to be Used?

HealthySEAT is intended primarily as a tool for school districts to use to periodically evaluate their school facilities at a macro level to be sure that all of the essential elements of key programs are being properly managed school-by-school. Districts choose the frequency with which they will conduct assessments, though EPA recommends that an assessment be conducted at each school at least annually. Districts may conduct the assessments using district staff, school-based staff, contractors, or a combination, depending on their particular circumstances and available resources.

The HealthySEAT software is designed specifically to manage information on multiple buildings. For this reason, the software itself is not intended to be used by individual schools. However, the customized checklist and guidebook developed by the district will be a potentially valuable resource for school-based as well as district staff.

It is important to note that HealthySEAT is **not** a substitute for the day-to-day vigilance and good practice that is required at every school to effectively manage environmental, health, and safety issues in a manner that protects children, staff, and the environment at all times.

Many states, tribes, and school districts are already undertaking or encouraging school facility assessments, and EPA has designed HealthySEAT so that these states, tribes, and districts can easily incorporate their own checklists into the software. During and after the customization process, a simple toggle switch allows districts to view and use either the district-customized program or EPA-included assessment actions.

EPA strongly encourages states and tribes to work across the appropriate agencies to incorporate their own requirements into HealthySEAT to help reduce the duplication of effort required for each district to independently research applicable requirements.

Getting Started

1. **Visit** http://www.epa.gov/schools and click on HealthySEAT.
2. **Review** the on-line "Getting Started" tutorial.
3. **Download** HealthySEAT.
4. **Install** on your Windows computer.
5. **Customize** for district policies and programs.
6. **Use** the customized HealthySEAT Checklist and Guidebook to conduct periodic self-assessments of school facility conditions.

Minimum System Requirements
Windows-based PC with Windows 2000 or XP Operating System
Pentium-compatible chip (233 MHz or higher), III Recommended
128+ MB of RAM
Optimal screen resolution of 1024 x 768 pixels
Screen color quality (16-bit or better)

For Further Information

EPA Healthy School Environments Web Site:
http://epa.gov/schools

Bob Axelrad
EPA Office of Radiation and Indoor Air, Indoor Environments Division
Axelrad.bob@epa.gov

Bill Jones
EPA Region 9
Jones.bill@epa.gov

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HealthySEAT is adapted from a database tool originally developed by the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD), Office of Environmental Health and Safety, to conduct self-assessment inspections in its approximately 900 school facilities. EPA has made substantial modifications to the tool in order to make it widely available to the more than 14,000 school districts nationwide.

The checklist provided with HealthySEAT was developed by EPA, and draws from many such resources that have been developed across the country. A comprehensive draft checklist in development by the Indoor Environments Section of the Ohio Department of Health was particularly helpful in organizing the areas of the school to be assessed.

EPA also received extremely valuable input during the development of HealthySEAT from a number of organizations that field tested or otherwise reviewed the Beta version of the software or provided content included with the tool.

- Maryland Department of Environment
- Carroll County, Maryland School District
- Pennsylvania Department of Health
- Harrisburg, PA City School District
- Miami-Dade County Public Schools
- Milwaukee Public Schools
- State of Wisconsin. Bureau of Environmental and Occupational Health
- Katy Independent School District, Katy, Texas
- Salt Lake City School District
- Visalia Unified School District, Visalia, California
- Navajo Nation Environmental Protection Agency
- Universidad del Turabo, Puerto Rico
- Minnesota Department of Health
- U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission
- U.S. Department of Education
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Centers for Disease Control
- Healthy Schools Network