

The Local Landscape

INSIDE

Special Issue

Back to School & Children's Health!

Dear Community Leader:

In honor of Children's Health Month, EPA New England is pleased to present you with the most recent edition of the Local Landscape. EPA recognizes the vital role that municipal leaders play to ensure a bright future for our youngest minds and EPA is here to help meet those goals of improving public health and our surrounding environment.

Inside we hope you will find resources and information that is both inspiring and useful, as we highlight some of our programs and congratulate communities who lead the way for improving the health and learning environments for New England's children.

Sincerely,

Robert W. Varney
Administrator
EPA New England Office

Giant Strides to Improve Indoor Air Quality with "Tools for Schools"

New England is a national model for taking steps to improve indoor air quality in its schools. EPA New England has been successful in helping the highest number of schools in the United States achieve healthy learning and teaching environments. In 1995, EPA developed the Indoor Air Quality Tools for Schools (IAQ TFS) program to try to reduce exposure to indoor

environmental contaminants. Since the program's inception, hundreds of schools across the country have made efforts to reduce indoor health hazards. Studies have shown that poor indoor air quality leads to negative impacts on student and teacher health, leading to lower student achievement and inducing conditions such as fatigue, nausea

continued on page 2

1. **ORGANIZE** dedicated individuals with support from senior management
2. **ASSESS** current IAQ conditions and issues
3. **CREATE** a **PLAN** that will identify, resolve and prevent IAQ problems
4. **TAKE ACTIONS** to improve student and staff health and productivity
5. **EVALUATE** and track results
6. **COMMUNICATE** the intent, results and next steps



Heads Up! National Schools Symposium Washington D.C. December 6 – 8, 2007

This December EPA will host an annual Indoor Air Quality Tools for Schools National Symposium, in Washington D.C. Past events have drawn as many as 500 attendees, from air quality experts, teachers, parents, school admin-

istrators, maintenance staff, school nurses, community leaders and more. It is the premier event to learn about the IAQ Tools for Schools management programs and the chance to highlight

continued on page 2

(cont.) Indoor Air

and exacerbating long-term problems such as asthma. In fact, national statistics show that childhood asthma is responsible for over 15 million missed school days. EPA's Tools for Schools aims to reduce exposure to indoor contaminants by providing free guidance and educational materials for voluntary adoption by towns and school systems.

Successful school systems that have utilized this program have identified common necessary steps to ensuring the programs success.

National statistics show that childhood asthma is responsible for over 15 million missed school days.

Be sure to check in with your state's opportunities as well as EPA resources to tackle indoor air quality issues. If your district is not yet on board with EPA's Tools for Schools, EPA New England is here to help and urges that you give it a try this school year. Available and free resources include the IAQ Action Kit, fact sheets, brochures and software.

For a complete list of available program tools and success stories please visit: www.epa.gov/iaq/schools ❖

(cont.) Symposium

award-winning school districts. Participants can learn about the following:

- Using the IAQ TfS Action Kit and adopting IAQ management practices
- Latest issues in environmental health, including radon and mold
- Asthma management
- Maintaining ventilation systems for good IAQ
- Components of high-performing schools
- Green cleaning and environmentally friendly product selection
- Building science and school building design
- Facility management
- Effective risk communication

Visit the official Website of the IAQ TfS Symposium to learn more about the upcoming Symposium, how to register, and to find presentations and materials from previous symposia at www.iaqsymposium.com ❖

Indoor Air Quality Excellence Award to Hartford Schools

The Hartford School District in Connecticut was among six school districts nationwide recognized this past year for exceptional efforts to improve air quality. This recognition is EPA's most prestigious award for exemplary indoor air quality programs and commitment

to providing a healthy learning environment for students and staff. The winners were selected from hundreds of schools and districts nationwide who have successfully initiated programs to improve indoor air quality.

"Children spend so much time in schools that we need to ensure they have a healthy environment to learn in," said Robert Varney, regional administrator of EPA's New England office. "This award recognizes those schools that are taking care of indoor environmental pollutants and irritants that may affect the health and productivity of students and staff."

Energy Efficiency in K-12 Schools

As a new school year is underway, budget constraints seem to be looming around every corner, but there are more ways than one to save. On average, American K through 12 schools spend approximately \$6 billion a year on energy expenses, more than is spent on computers and textbooks combined! Many schools across New England have proven that the usage of

energy efficient technology has saved as much as 25-30 percent in energy bills. Energy Star and EPA have teamed up to light the way for wasted energy dollars to go where it really counts: education.

For more information on energy efficient schools and educational resources please visit: www.energystar.gov/schools

EPA New England challenges communities to save money and reduce air pollution by assessing their energy use. Join the Community Energy Challenge to identify potential energy savings in your municipal buildings! More information: www.epa.gov/ne/eco/energy/energy-challenge

Do Your Students Have Brilliant Ideas to Protect the Environment? President's Environmental Youth Awards

The October 31st deadline for this year's projects past, but a new year begins for new ideas! Since 1971, EPA has sponsored this program to recognize K through 12 students who demonstrate their compassion and commitment to protecting the environment. Projects submitted in the past have included recycling programs in schools and communities; construction of

nature preserves; major tree planting programs; videos, skits, and newsletters created by students focused on environmental issues. To be eligible to compete, a student or group of students, sponsored by an adult, must submit to their local EPA regional office evidence of a completed project as defined in the PEYA application, as well as a complet-

ed application. Winners from each region will be invited to attend a ceremony in Washington D.C. and have in the past been recognized personally by the President.

For information on this contest, past winners, applications and more please visit EPA's Environmental Education website:
www.epa.gov/enviroed/peya

Get Ready for the 2008 Earth Artists Contest

*** Entries due by March 2008 ***

Open to K-6 • For rules and additional information visit: www.epa.gov/ne/students/poem.html



Get Kids Involved!!

From beetles to beluga whales kid's love learning about nature. Yet, only after their imagination is captivated can they understand the need for humans to help protect the environment which supports the Earth's creepy, crawly, and cute inhabitants. Help inspire environmental care and concern in the young minds that attend your schools by promoting environmental education. Learning about the environment encourages an understanding of how our individual actions affect our planet, near and far.

For more information on grants, resources and current EPA educational programs please visit:
www.epa.gov/enviroed

Promote Environmental Education! bigger Educating ourselves about the impacts of our decisions and the small things we can all do to help is necessary to protect our air, water, and local landscape, only then can we hope for a healthier future. Help New England's children become environmental stewards early on.

Visit www.epa.gov/students for free resources, EPA publications, information for teachers about upcoming grants and contests, activities for kids and much more.

Say NO to School Bus Fumes!

While school buses are the safest way to transport children to and from school, diesel exhaust from idling buses accumulates in and around the bus and inside nearby buildings, posing a serious health risk. Diesel exhaust contains significant levels of fine particulate matter. These particles can easily pass through the nose and throat, lodging themselves deep in the lungs. When inhaled repeatedly, the fine particles in diesel exhaust may aggravate asthma and allergies or cause other serious health problems including lung cancer.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is working aggressively to reduce pollution from new diesel engines through the adoption of stringent emissions standards. In addition, EPA has also drastically reduced the sulfur content in diesel fuel. As a result, new diesel engines manufactured in 2007 and beyond will be significantly cleaner than the existing fleet of buses. However, since diesel engines can last from 25 to 30 years it will take time for the full health benefits of these new standards to be realized.

For this reason, EPA's National Clean Diesel Campaign is actively

promoting voluntary efforts to reduce emissions from existing diesel engines. EPA's Clean School Bus USA program was launched in 2003 with three goals: **reduce idling** and reinforce smart driving practices; **retrofit** existing buses with advanced pollution controls; and **replace** the oldest school buses with new ones.

More than 1.7 million children in New England ride a bus to and from school every day. Through local and regional partnerships such as Greater Boston Breathes Better and the Northeast Diesel Collaborative, EPA New

England is working with state and local governments, school communities, institutions, and others to reduce pollution from school buses and other diesel vehicles.

For more information online: EPA's Clean School Bus USA program and funding opportunities: www.epa.gov/cleanschoolbus/

EPA New England's diesel program: www.epa.gov/ne/diesel

Northeast Diesel Collaborative: www.northeastdiesel.org



Wipe Out Chemical Hazards in Schools

Chemical accidents in schools put students at serious risk, in addition to disrupting schedules and costing thousands of dollars. EPA's School Chemical Clean-out Campaign intends to diminish this risk by ensuring that schools are taking the proper steps to manage chemicals, from labs to utility closets, and properly disposing of what is unnecessary and harmful. EPA New England's Office of Environmental Stewardship has spearheaded efforts to develop a "pharmacy approach" to chemical management in Massachusetts schools. Working with the

middle schools in Quincy, Mass., EPA New England has removed 303 thermometers, 8 barometers, 36 other mercury devices and 31 pounds of elemental mercury. In addition, EPA New England has partnered with Everett High School, Braintree High School, Quincy High School and North Quincy High School to conduct chemical inventories in their science departments. Inventories allow school officials to make clearer decisions regarding usable and waste chemicals. Unnecessary chemicals are properly disposed of

using the schools' existing contracts for chemical waste disposal. While this year's numbers have not yet been tallied, EPA New England's partnership with schools last year resulted in the proper disposal of approximately 2,800 pounds of unused or outdated chemicals.

For more information on school chemical clean outs, please visit EPA's "Schools Chemical Cleanout Campaign" web site: www.epa.gov/epaoswer/osw/conserved/clusters/schools

EPA's Summer Top Stories for a Greener New England

Connecticut Bans Boat Discharges along Connecticut's Entire Coastline

As of July 26, 2007 Connecticut has followed in the footsteps of Rhode Island and New Hampshire to become the first three states in the country to designate their entire coastlines as no discharge areas.

EPA'S Ocean and Coastal Research Vessel Visits Newport, RI

Over 200 visitors and residents of Newport had the unique opportunity to tour EPA's single state of the art research ship this July. Minds of all ages were able to explore the ship's features from the captain's deck to the bottom imaging technology as well as interact with native Rhode Island ocean animals and organisms collected offshore.

New England Coastal States 2007 Beach Funding Surpasses \$ 7 Million

Since 2001, EPA New England launched It's a Shore Thing Beach Initiative to protect public health by reducing pollution levels that cause beach closures. Grant funding improves monitoring along New England's coastline to ensure that beaches are closed when bacteria levels from polluted runoff and untreated sewage are present. By extensively monitoring the bacteria levels and type, New England can come closer to eliminating the sources of contamination and keeping our beautiful beaches open and clean.

It's a Shore Thing 2007 Grants

Maine \$254,730

New Hampshire \$204,530

Massachusetts \$254,440

Rhode Island \$212,640

Connecticut \$223,370

Vermont, New Hampshire & Connecticut Lead the Nation in Energy Star Home Construction

In 2006, energy star home construction accounted for over 17 percent of new homes in all three states.



Governor of Connecticut Jodie Rell, EPA New England Administrator Robert Varney and Connecticut DEP Commissioner Gina McCarthy



EPA's state-of-the-art Ocean and Coastal Research Vessel

Highlighting 2007 New England Success In Children's Health

Connecticut Department of Public Health (Statewide)

Building a Statewide Comprehensive, Sustaining Tools for Schools Program

The Connecticut Department of Public Health's Environmental & Occupational Health Assessment Program is on course to have nearly 100% of schools adopt EPA's Tools for Schools program after this current school year; a great model for fellow New England states to follow. Connecticut law requires that all schools implement and maintain indoor air quality programs and the Connecticut Department of Public Health strongly recommends Tools for Schools as the most effective program to meet this mandate.

American Lung Association of Maine

Maine Cool Communities

The Maine Cool Communities project seeks to improve energy efficiency in schools through outreach and education efforts. The project will achieve this goal by hosting an energy efficiency workshop for school districts statewide.

Massachusetts Coalition of Occupational Safety & Health (Statewide)

Asthma Prevention through Healthy Schools

The "Asthma Prevention through Healthy Schools Initiative" aims to

boost the capacity of low-income communities to improve the environmental health of their neighborhoods. In partnership with eight Boston schools with high asthma rates, Mass COSH will integrate environmental assessments into the schools and boost the leadership roles of parents and teachers for establishing or expanding asthma coalitions elsewhere and promoting city-wide policies that support those piloted efforts.

City of Manchester Department of Health (Manchester, NH)

Multilingual Asthma Education & Outreach Program

The City of Manchester's Department of Health, in collaboration with key community partners, has developed the "Multilingual Asthma Education & Outreach Program" to bring asthma education to the homes of multilingual families. The project will increase patient and parental understanding of asthma and proper treatment while also identifying and eliminating environmental triggers in the home, such as exposure to tobacco smoke.

Childhood Lead Action Project (Providence, RI)

Lead Paint Citizen Engagement Initiative

The Childhood Lead Action Project is a non-profit organization dedicated to eliminating childhood lead poisoning in Rhode Island through education, parent support and community involvement. The "Lead Paint Citizen Engagement Initiative" will focus outreach and remediation resources towards Providence, Central Falls and Woonsocket which have the highest incidence of childhood lead poisoning.

Vermont Department of Health (Statewide)

Vermont Healthy Schools

The "Vermont Healthy Schools" project promotes environmental health in schools through the implementation of EPA's Tools for Schools Program to decrease asthma incidents. The project will educate and mentor indoor air quality school teams, develop environmental management plans and award grants to ease implementation costs. In addition, the program will work to reduce exposure to diesel exhaust from idling school buses by distributing anti-idling signs and assisting to develop anti-idling policies.



Brilliance in Energy High Performance

Upton, Mass. Blackstone Valley Regional Vocational Technical High School

Blackstone Valley Tech no longer suffers from overcrowded classrooms and expensive utility bills. The updated building includes five striking solar panels on the roof and is expected to produce more than 60,000 kWh each year. Additionally, there are solar water heating arrays, combined with displacement ventilation, high-efficiency lighting, occupancy and daylight sensors which are all predicted to help save this school \$160,000 per year.

Somerville, Mass. Michael E. Capuano Early Childhood Center

Five hundred and sixty children attend the Capuano School and are already learning to appreciate the environment. The Capuano School is also a neighborhood resource, with playing fields, a gymnasium and public gardens. Day light enhances indoor aesthetics and improves the learning environment. Construction costs were reduced and effective usage of natural light will continue to decrease costs, saving an expected \$58,000 per year (38% percent savings beyond state code). Occupied since September 2003, it was the first school in New England to register with the U.S. Green Building Council's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED).

Whitman, Mass. Whitman-Hanson Regional High School

The towns of Whitman and Hanson built an affordable school that conserves energy while enhancing the learning environment through a pilot project for the Massachusetts Green Schools Initiative. The initiative is a financial and technical assistance partnership between the Massachusetts School Building Authority and the Massachusetts Technology Collaborative. The new school includes solar panels on the roof of the gymnasium, daylighting, efficient appliances and features to decrease water usage. Landscaping was designed to be drought resistant and a 20,000 gallon underground tank collects rainwater to supply the school's plumbing system. The money saved in energy costs has gone to providing the students with state of the art educational aids such as interactive white boards, LCD projectors for all classrooms, a "distance learning center," "smart conference rooms" and cyber cafes.

The Medical Foundation

2007 Children's Environmental Health Excellence Award

Improving Asthma Environmental Management through Health Care Policy Change

The Medical Foundation's Asthma Regional Council was recognized in Washington D.C. on October 11. The ARC is a coalition of government, community, academic and health organizations that seeks to address asthma burdens across New England. The ARC's 2007-2008 project focuses on the tackling the environmental contributors that can exacerbate or cause asthma by improving health plan opportunities for low-income asthmatic children. The ARC will educate and encourage at least three health plans across the region to pay for and engage in the best practices for asthma care. To improve the financial sustainability and availability of these services, the ARC will work with state Asthma Managers in New England Departments of Health to create strategies for changing health care payment and asthma service policies.

For more information visit:

www.asthmaregionalcouncil.org



Asthma Regional Council

**EPA New England
Local Government Office**

EPA-901-R-07-004
October 2007

Douglas Gutro
gutro.doug@epa.gov
phone (617) 918-1021
fax (617) 918-0021

Editor

Jeanethe Falvey
falvey.jeanethe@epa.gov

EPA Contributors

Eugene Benoit, Kristen Conroy,
Lucy Edmonson, Jeanethe Falvey
Halida Hatic, Chris Jendras,
Kathleen Nagle & Dwight Peavey

www.epa.gov/ne

 printed on 100% recycled paper, with a minimum of 50% post-consumer waste, using vegetable based inks



1 Congress Street
Suite 1100
Boston, MA 02114

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