Important Notice

Attention all School Board Members, Superintendents, Principals, Teachers, and Support Staff,

In the days following the tragic events at Aztec High School on December 7th, 2017, Poms & Associates has been inundated with requests to schedule Active Shooter Training in schools throughout New Mexico. This message is a friendly reminder that, as the Risk Services provider for the New Mexico Public Schools Insurance Authority, we offer a wide variety of Safety, Security, and Human Resources trainings to all NMPSIA members. These resources are available at no cost to the schools.

There have been several reports in the media regarding districts contracting with outside vendors to provide Active Shooter and other similar trainings. We would like to encourage our members to please contact Poms & Associates before you contract and pay for any training resources to find out if we can assist without having to incur additional costs.

Please feel free to share this message with all School Boards, Governing Councils, Superintendents, Principals, Teachers, and Support Staff who are responsible for scheduling training.
Custodial Ergonomics

Custodial work is intense, fast-paced, and physically challenging. Some custodial tasks can put workers at risk of an injury to muscles, ligaments, nerves, tendons, blood vessels, and joints of wrists, arms, shoulders, neck, back and legs. These injuries can be impacted by the constant, strenuous activities, using awkward posture and positions that are sustained for long periods.

Moving Barrels/Carts:
- Only stock with supplies needed for that day
- Place items used most frequently, closest to you
- To reduce the chances of tipping, distribute the weight evenly
- Slow down on rough, uneven surfaces and when crossing thresholds
- If it starts to tip over, let it go

Trash Removal:
- Check the weight of the can by tilting or pushing it
- Ensure trash bags are not overfilled
  - Place a false bottom in container
  - Tie off bag when ½ full
- When removing trash, bend your knees and keep your back in a neutral position
- Try to keep trash container between shoulder and knee height and not in “danger zone”
- When possible, alternate between hand to pick up and lower trash cans
- Drill holes in sides of barrels/cans to reduce the suction effect when removing bags
- Tilting the container on its side and pulling can also reduce suction; however can cause user to use awkward posture
- Do not stoop over to reline cans. Bend at knees and maintain an ‘S’ curve in back
- Use carts or dollies to transport heavy trash bags. Face the dumpster, lift and put trash in do not toss or throw.

Making a few, simple adjustments in work practices can make a remarkable difference. Ensure you are doing what you can to alleviate the stress and maximize the benefits of practicing good ergonomics. If you would like to request an ergonomics evaluation, please contact dworley@pomsassoc.com.

Safety in the School Science Lab

With all the fun experiments and hands-on lessons, the science classroom can be an exciting place; however there are also some unique hazards that can be related to some experiments. By following posted rules and keeping important guidelines everyone can stay safe and have fun learning about science.

One of the first things that should be reviewed with students is the Safety Rules. Print out a list of class rules and post them in the classroom for students to review. There are many resources available on-line.

There are many ways that teachers and school personnel can promote safety in the science classroom. One of the most important is by taking safety seriously, no matter how minor that experiment may seem, it is important for students to know that you, as the teacher, take it seriously. When they see that it is important to practice safety even with minor experiments that behavior will come as second nature to them with major experiments.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) is one of the most important safety lessons you can teach students. Do they know how to select the proper goggles for an experiment? Do they require hearing protection? What about wearing aprons? These items should be available and utilized by all students when doing experiments.

If something happens do you have the proper safety equipment such as eye washes, showers or fire extinguishers? Are you and the students familiar with how this equipment works and where it is located?

For more information on science lab safety in schools you can go to http://labsafety.flinnsci.com/Home.aspx.
ACTIVE SHOOTER TRAINING

It is hard to believe it has been over five years since the December 2012 tragedy at Sandy Hook Elementary. It sometimes can seem like every time we turn on the news there has been another shooting, especially when these tragedies hit so close to home like in the horrible Aztec High School shooting that happened just weeks ago.

But let's put school shootings into context. The National Center for Juvenile Justice has found that the rate of violent crime in schools has actually decreased significantly over the last 20 years. This doesn't mean that school violence isn't still a problem; in fact, more than 750,000 incidents of violent crime occurred in US schools during the 2013-2014 school year, however schools are learning and growing and many schools have successfully thwarted potential active shooters through intensive training, lock downs, awareness, safe school plans, and more.

Insights from the Secret Service about the profile of a school shooter:
It is important to keep in mind that the Secret Service does not give a full “profile” of school shooters due to the fact that attackers “varied considerably in demographic, background, and other characteristics.” However, they do provide the following information:

- All of the attacks were committed by males
- 98% of the attackers had experienced or perceived a major loss prior to the attack
- 78% of the attackers had a history of suicide attempts or suicidal thoughts prior to the attack
- 71% of the attackers felt persecuted, bullied, threatened, attacked, or injured by others prior to the attack
- In several cases, the harassment was described as “long-standing and severe”
- 95% of the attackers were current students at the school
- 59% of the attacks occurred during the school day
- In 73% of the attacks, the shooters had a grievance against at least one of their targets
- 61% of attackers used handguns
- 49% used rifles or shotguns
- Nearly half of all attackers carried multiple weapons during the attack
- 81% of attackers acted alone

Though school shootings seem to happen almost weekly, and are all over the news, it is important to remember that school shootings are very rare. The likelihood of a student being killed while at school is less than one in a million. One shooting in school, one injury or death in our schools, is one too many. Being prepared is a school's best defense. The follow recommendations can help a school be prepared:

1) Train staff and students to recognize the signs
   Many studies have shown that school shooters often engage in behaviors that concern others prior to a shooting. Train all students and school personnel how to spot these behaviors, and be sure to have a safe and effective way of reporting available.

2) Develop an emergency management plan and Safe School Plan
   PED requires schools to develop Safe School Plans, which should address critical response practices such as lockdowns, evacuations, parent-student reunification, and mental health responses. Plans should be regularly reviewed and updated.
3) Train staff
The very first line of defense against a school shooting is a vigilant staff that is trained to recognize and report potential indicators of violence and assist law enforcement and other first responders.

4) Conduct site assessments
Campus facilities and grounds should be examined to identify any potential security weaknesses, such as:
- Unlocked doors
- Ineffective communications systems
- Line-of-sight issues for surveillance cameras
- Broken fences or gates
- Traffic patterns that impede access by emergency responders

5) Form community partnerships
Communicate to everyone in the community in a proactive and non-fear-based way that they must take threats they hear, read, and see seriously, and encourage them to report their concerns to campus and local authorities.

6) Work with local responders:
It is recommended schools work closely with their local first responders; providing blueprints of each campus building, showing how the school and staff perform lockdowns, where the school plans on taking students in case of an evacuation, and so on. This ensures that if something were to happen, first responders will know what environment they might be walking into as much as possible.

7) Conduct drills and continually train all personnel and students
Regularly and frequently train students, teachers, staff, clinicians and administrators on how to respond under stress to all kinds of emergencies, including active shooters, via drills and, when possible and appropriate, full-scale exercises.

8) Set up anonymous tip lines:
Anonymous tip lines can be text, email, and/or phone and are there so that students, staff, clinicians, and patients can anonymously report concerning behavior to campus officials and threat/behavioral assessment teams. Encourage the use of these solutions and educate the campus community on how to use them.

Resources:
- The FBI Active Shooter Resources; including emergency plan examples, reports, and FERPA/HIPPA guidance.
- The Department of Homeland Security offers many free courses, materials, and workshops.
- Poms also offers several active shooter trainings, safe school plan assessments, and other relevant training in all facets of Emergency Management - Safe School Plans, Threat Assessment, Crisis Response, etc.

Please contact us at pomsconnects@pomsassoc.com for more information or to schedule training.
Screening Volunteers at Your School

Sexual abuse of children is one of the most severe risks facing schools today, as molestation claims can easily go into millions of dollars. Even worse, the effects of sexual abuse can devastate not only the victim, but also the school and the entire community. It is vital schools have proper policies and procedures in place to screen all school personnel before hiring, but too often schools do not use the same strict procedures when selecting volunteers that supervise, train, or otherwise work closely with children.

As budgets tighten, volunteers become more and more important in every school, filling roles like tutors, coaches, classroom assistants, playground monitors, chaperones, coaches, and more. Schools need to be careful that they are not so desperate to fill these roles and save on money that they do not follow through on their due diligence and end up with a million dollar litigation on their hands.

Screening levels should increase with the volunteer’s level of access to children. Many schools have been relying on background checks to select their volunteers. While useful, fewer than 5% of background checks turn up adverse information on applicants. They simply do not go far enough. A formal application, reference process, and interview with school staff can provide further insights into potential volunteers (and employees). Also, if your school is a member of a database or clearinghouse, a good practice is to search every potential employee and volunteer’s name. Having a rigorous screening process alone can serve as a deterrent to people with illicit motives.

Volunteer Applications:
A volunteer application can look very similar to an employment application; much of the same information can be requested.

They should include:
• Demographic details including: address; home, business, and cell phone numbers; email address; emergency contact information; and three references.
• Current and former employment and volunteer experience.
• Questions like:
  o Have you had previous experience working with children?
  o Why would you like to be a volunteer in our school?
  o What strengths and experiences would make you a successful volunteer?
  o What do you hope to gain from your volunteer experience?

Applicants who fail to complete the questions and/or submit an application with incomplete or inadequate information should be disqualified from volunteering.

Interviewing:
In order to build a more complete picture of a volunteer applicant, an in-person interview is necessary. It is important to ask open-ended questions that encourage discussion, and to clarify and expand on the applicant’s written answers on their application.

Reference Checks:
Running reference checks on potential volunteers can help administrators see what the volunteer will be like on the job. Good references could include previous/current employers as well as neighbors or friends. However, relatives should not be used as references. Employment dates and responsibilities, as well as character references can be learned from reference checks. Be sure to obtain verbal, not just written, references. Be aware that many employers will only provide basic information, such as dates of employment or rehiring eligibility. If a former employer will only provide limited information, clarify whether the person providing the reference is limiting information because of company policy.
Administrators should ensure that all reference checks and the summary of their findings are properly documented and filed.

**Background Checks:**
There are many different types of background checks; some are to check for criminal history and motor vehicle records, others look at educational records and financial credit. Volunteers that work with children should submit to a criminal records check, fingerprinting, and being checked against the sex offender registry and any other database available. This includes the parents of students (or grandparents of students) who desire to volunteer.

**Supervision:**
Whenever possible, the time volunteers spend with students in unsupervised settings needs to be limited. This will help reduce the likelihood of inappropriate actions. The CDC also recommends that two adults be present with youths at all times.

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**Training Offered by Poms & Associates**

Poms & Associates offers talent and expertise in developing material, lesson plans, and presenting classes in areas such as:

**Human Resources**
- Drug Free Workplace
- Title VII
- Discrimination
- Sexual Harassment
- ADA and the Rehabilitation Act
- Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA)
- Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA)
- HIPAA/FERPA
- Cyber/Bulling Prevention
- Incident Report Writing

**Health & Safety**
- Hazard Communication/Right-to-know Law
- Chemical Hygiene and Laboratory Safety
- Bloodborne Pathogens
- Personal Protective Equipment
- Ladder Safety
- Introduction to Ergonomics
- Playground Safety
- Electrical Safety
- NFPA Life Safety Code
- Back Safety/Lifting Techniques
- Behavior Management
- Disciplinary Problems
- Wrongful Termination
- Development of Safety Policies
- Red Cross First Aid/CPR/AED
- Introduction to OSHA
- Defensive Driving
- Housekeeping and Storage Practices
- Accident Investigations
- Ergonomics
- Drug Physiology (sign/symptoms of use)
- Suicide Awareness 101
- Hazmat Response
- Safe School Plan Review
- Identifying a Predator
- Internet Safety
- Mental Health Awareness: Crisis Intervention

**Security**
- Sexual Molestation & Assault
- Gang Recognition
- Security/Intruder Assessment
- School Violence
- Workplace Violence
- Violent Threat Response
- Verbal De-escalation
- Emergency Operations Planning/Review
- Bomb Threat Response
- Threat Assessment: Assessing Dangerous Behavior

Design your own topic or pick a topic and we’ll design the training program to suit your needs!

*To schedule your training sessions, email pomsconnects@pomsassoc.com or give us a call at 505-797-1354*
Pipe Freeze
When the temperature drops, water pipes running through unheated spaces like attics, crawl spaces, and soffits can freeze. Frozen water inside of piping stops water flow, which in turn causes the pipe to burst downstream of the ice. A burst pipe can leak between 4 and 8 gallons of water per minute into the surrounding area. The resulting damage can be catastrophic, with mold mitigation issues often taking years to resolve. However, by taking a few precautions, you can greatly reduce the risk of pipe freeze.

1. The building should be kept at a temperature of at least 55 degrees. Anything less greatly increases the risk of pipes freezing. Be aware that unforeseen circumstances, such as power outages or loss of heating gas/fuel, can lead to a building’s temperature to drop below 55 degrees unexpectedly. Being aware of weather conditions and fuel levels can help you reduce the risk of the building’s temperature dropping below 55 degrees.

2. Identify areas in your building(s) that are particularly at risk for pipe freeze. Areas that are poorly insulated, poorly heated, or have poor air circulation are at very high risk for having pipes freeze. Having a good understanding of a building’s plumbing layout can help you identify high risk spots that may not always be obvious. Unheated basements, stairwells, sally ports, utility rooms, attics, and poorly insulated exterior walls are common dead spaces. The closer an area is to heating, the less likely it is to have pipes freeze. The International Plumbing Code states that “there must always be a heat source along with an appropriate insulation thickness in order to protect pipes from freezing conditions. Insulation itself (without a heat source) cannot protect a pipe from freezing; insulation only slows the rate of heat loss.”

3. In the event of a pipe bursting, shut off the main water valves for the building to prevent further damage. Key personnel should all be made aware of the locations of these main shut-off valves for each building. It is critical to begin cleaning up the leak and drying the affected areas before mold beings to form.

Slips, Trips, and Falls
Train and educate your employees to properly identify, report, and correct slip, trip and fall hazards in the workplace. Common hazards include wet, slippery surfaces, icy walkways, and transition areas from outside to inside. Develop a checklist that can be used in daily, weekly, bi-weekly, and monthly inspections. Be aware that hazards can develop in between inspections, so be sure that any training includes teaching employees to look for developing hazards. Finally, be sure to document any corrective actions you take as a result of your inspections.

Ice Dams
As few as 2 inches of snow accumulation on a roof can result in the formation of an ice dam. When snow melts on roof sections above a poorly insulated attic, the resulting meltwater travels to the cold and uninsulated eaves. The meltwater get into the area between the roof edge and gutter and refreezes, forming the ice dam. This ice dam then prevents additional meltwater from leaving the roof, further increasing the size and weight of the ice dam with every refreeze. These pose a high risk of structural damage, as well as mold and mildew contamination if the meltwater near the dam gets under shingles or through small cracks or holes in the roof. Every routine winter damage inspection should include checking for and removing ice dams. If you are finding ice dams, check the quality of the roof insulation. Old and ineffective insulation should be removed and replaced.

Snow Loading and Roof Collapse
Heavy snow fall poses a risk to roof collapses. According to FEMA’s “Snow Load Safety Guide” no two snow events are identical. Resulting roof loads can vary depending on snow type, the fall rate, whether snow has melted between storms, ambient air temperature, and the age and condition of the structures upon which the snow accumulates.
Portable Space Heaters

Heating equipment is the second leading cause of home fires in the United States. They can be a convenient source of supplemental heat for your home and office in cold weather, but unfortunately, they can also pose significant fire and electric shock hazards if not used properly.

**REMEMBER: SPACE HEATERS NEED SPACE**

If a space cannot be adequately heated via the installed building heating system, do the following:
- Contact your Facility Manager to report the condition.
- If the installed system cannot be repaired in a timely manner, Facilities may recommend a temporary space heater. Only temporary space heaters provided or approved by Facility Manager should be used.

Fire and electrical hazards can be caused by space heaters without adequate safety features, space heaters placed near combustibles, or space heaters that are improperly plugged in. The requirements listed below, applicable code requirements, and manufacturer’s recommendations must be followed to maintain a safe environment.

**Safety tips:**
- Do not place heaters under desks or other enclosed areas.
- Purchase a space heater with the Underwriters Laboratories (UL) safety mark, which signifies that the product was tested for potential safety hazards.
- Only use space heaters with a tip-over switch, which turns the heater off automatically if it gets knocked over. Be certain your model does not turn back on once the element has cooled down.
- Heaters must be monitored when in operation.
- Proper placement of space heaters is critical. Heaters must be kept at least three feet away from anything that can burn, including papers, clothing and rugs.
- Space heaters are only meant to provide supplemental heat and should never be used to warm bedding, cook food, dry clothing or thaw pipes.
- Plug heater directly into a wall receptacle. Never plug it into an extension cord.
- Heaters need to be monitored daily. Those heaters missing guards, control knobs, feet, etc. must be taken out of service immediately and repaired by a competent person.
- Do not use heaters in rooms that will not be continually occupied.
- Keep doors and windows closed, including storm windows. This will help prevent freeze-ups.
- Keep space heaters away from exit ways, walkways, and paths of travel.
- Do not use space heaters in wet areas like bathrooms or kitchens.
- Do not use portable space heaters if small children are expected in the area.
- No open-coil space heaters are permitted in any university buildings.
- Space heaters of any type are prohibited in laboratories.
- Always unplug and safely store the heater when it is not in use.

**Shut Down**

Simple “shut-down” measures done before the winter break can leave more money for academic needs:
- Turn off ALL non-essential computers, monitors, printers, scanners, and other peripherals.
- Turn off power-strips used for non-essential equipment.
- Turn off and unplug TVs, DVDs, VCRs, Promethean boards, document cameras, projectors, and all other non-essential classroom/office electronic equipment.
- Turn off all display case lighting.
- Defrost, turn off, empty, and unplug refrigerators.
- Make sure all windows are closed and locked, and blinds are pulled down.
- Turn thermostats down to 60 degrees.
- Report leaking of drinking fountains, faucets, showers and toilets.

**Tip:** Use switchable power strips when possible to make shutting down easier and to avoid having to unplug each device.
According to the US Department of Transportation, 7400 people are killed and over 673,000 people are injured in weather-related driving crashes each year. Winter driving can be hazardous and scary, especially in northern regions that get a lot of snow and ice. Additional preparations can help make a trip safer, or help motorists deal with an emergency.

The following tips can help make your winter trips safer:

**Remember the three Ps of Safe Winter Driving:**
- **PREPARE** for the trip;
- **PROTECT** yourself; and
- **PREVENT** crashes on the road.

**PREPARE**
Maintain your vehicle(s) by checking your brakes, lights, battery, tire tread, and windshield wipers to ensure they are all in good working order. Check your antifreeze level and use no-freeze fluid in your washer reservoir.

Have on hand: flashlight, jumper cables, abrasive material (sand, kitty litter, even floor mats), shovel, snow brush, and ice scraper, warning devices (like flares) and blankets. For long car trips, add food, water, any medication, and a cell phone and cell phone charger.

Stopped or Stalled? Stay in your car, don’t overexert, put bright markers on antenna or windows and shine dome light, and, if you run your car, clear exhaust pipe and run it just enough to stay warm.

Plan Your Route by allowing plenty of time to get to each destination. Check the weather on your route before you leave. Familiarize yourself with your directions and let others know of your route and arrival time.

**Practice cold weather driving!**
- During the daylight, rehearse maneuvers slowly on ice or snow in an empty lot
- Steer into a skid
- Know what your brakes will do: stomp on antilock brakes, pump on non-antilock brakes
- Stopping distances are longer on water-covered roads and ice
- Don’t idle for a long time with the windows up or in an enclosed space

**PROTECT YOURSELF**
- Buckle up and use child safety seats properly
- Never place a rear-facing infant seat in front of an air bag
- Children age 12 and under are much safer in the back seat

**PREVENT CRASHES**
- Drugs and alcohol never mix with driving
- Slow down and increase distances between cars
- Keep your eyes open for pedestrians walking in the road, or cars pulled off on the shoulder
- Avoid fatigue by getting plenty of rest before your trip, and stopping to stretch every three hours