

Other School Construction Issues

Emergencies

V.S.A., T.16, §3448 addresses the method for responding to emergency construction in two ways. First, if the cost of any emergency work necessary to address health and safety threats to students and employees created by unanticipated circumstances or events is less than \$100,000, the Commissioner may grant 30% construction aid. Schools need to request the emergency construction aid funds on a form prescribed by the Commissioner. The information districts are required to provide when applying for emergency aid is listed in State Board Rule 6129.

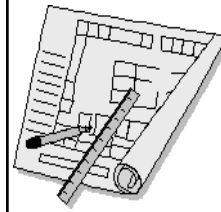
Secondly, if the cost exceeds \$100,000, the district should apply for construction aid through the regular application process in accordance with the State Board Rules. The State Board will assign projects deemed an emergency by the Commissioner first priority for funding.

Remember, that by statute the State Board is not permitted to provide any construction aid for projects that have arisen in whole or in part from significant deferred maintenance. See Rule 6136.

Re-Applying for Construction Aid

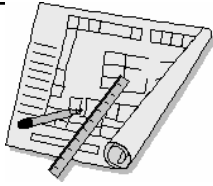
Under the new priority process, not all school projects that are presented to the legislature are guaranteed funding for the next fiscal year.

Those that do not receive funding will be included in the following year's request.



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Rule 6119 includes a process for school districts to appeal their rating by the Commissioner of Education within fifteen days of receiving it.

*The Department recommends school personnel contact the Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation or the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission and request a copy of the **Handbook for Public Playground Safety**.*

Appealing the Rating

Rule 6119 includes a process for school districts to appeal their rating by the Commissioner of Education within thirty days of receiving it. The district must submit the appeal in writing to the State Board and indicate what aspect of the rating the district is appealing. The letter must provide the State Board with a basis upon which to reconsider the rating given to the district and should include all data necessary to support the appeal.

Technology

Increasingly schools are incorporating and relying on computer technologies to help students achieve academic standards. Students are accessing more software and Internet connections to assist with their studies than ever before. With the help of professionals, schools need to plan for their entire technology infrastructure. Decisions need to be made around the electronic, telecommunication and cable infrastructure necessary to support the school's operations. These will include the installation of public address, security, and telephone systems as well as computer hardware and software.

Vermont has established standards for all schools to meet when it comes to technology in their curriculums. Many schools have already developed technology plans to align with these standards. Of course, this plan should be used in planning any school construction project to ensure the objectives of the plan will be achieved with the construction.

Playgrounds

State Board Rules do not specifically address playground requirements or equipment. The Department recommends school personnel contact the Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation or the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission and request a copy of the *Handbook for Public Playground Safety*. The guidelines are not standards and are not mandatory. However, if the recommendations are followed, they will minimize injuries associated with playground equipment and contribute to greater safety awareness when purchasing, installing and maintaining public playground equipment.

Purchase of a Building

Sometimes a district may want to purchase a building to meet its facility needs. The Commissioner has developed a different application form to use when purchasing a building. In addition to the some of exhibits required when constructing a new facility, this application requires an appraisal of the property by two or more independent appraisers, the cost of the building exclusive of site costs, type of construction, and year of construction (See Application section beginning on page 71).

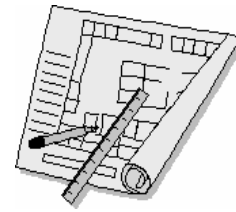
Indoor Air Quality

The 1995-1996 session of the general assembly established a committee on Vermont Indoor Air Quality in response to concerns raised by many Vermont residents who either work in state buildings or attend schools with inadequate ventilation. The legislature asked this committee to examine the quality of indoor air in state buildings and schools and to draft proposed rules to assure acceptable indoor air quality in these buildings.

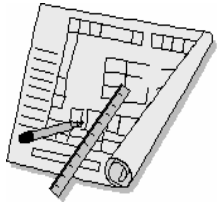
The statewide committee was divided into a state buildings and school buildings subcommittee. The subcommittee on schools met over the course of a year with the goal of issuing a report on indoor air quality standards for schools. The committee examined standards for designing and maintaining buildings so as to avoid or mitigate indoor air quality problems and explored protocols for dealing with indoor air quality complaints as they arose at the building level.

A copy of the July 1999 report of the subcommittee on indoor air quality in school buildings is available from the Department of Education.

The 2000 session of the general assembly enacted Act 125 relating to Indoor Air Quality in Vermont public schools. Act 125 directed that a model school environmental health policy and management plan be developed.



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Model Safety and Health Protocol for Schools

The 1997 General Assembly charged the State Board of Education with developing a model safety and health protocol for schools. The protocol requires each school board to ensure that all schools under its jurisdiction are well maintained in a safe and sanitary condition. It assigns to the administration of the school the responsibility for maintaining a safe and healthy school and for periodically inspecting the buildings and grounds. The protocol includes an annual in-house inspection to ensure that every student is provided a physical learning environment that is safe, secure and well maintained. To assist schools with conducting an annual in-house inspection, the Department of Education has produced a draft model guideline based on school safety standards and guidelines. These two draft documents are available upon request.