

Excessive temperatures

As the Summer has finally arrived, many schools may start to have issues with excessive temperatures. The NASUWT has extensive guidance on excessive temperatures, which can be found at: www.nasuw.org.uk/ExcessiveTemperatures.

In addition, given last year's extreme heat, joint union guidance on heatwaves was published earlier in the year, which can be accessed at: www.nasuw.org.uk/JointUnionHeatwaveProtocol. This sets out how employers should be dealing with potential extreme temperatures in the short, medium and long term. NASUWT Representatives should ensure that employers/school leaders are aware of the recommendations in the guidance and they are taking the appropriate actions.

Fire door guidance

Fire doors are a crucial part of the fire prevention system of any building, as they prevent the spread of fire and keep evacuation routes clear of smoke. However, they must be fitted and working correctly in order to offer this protection.

The NASUWT has produced a new checklist to assist Health and Safety Representatives in checking fire doors as part of regular health and safety inspections, and this can be found at: www.nasuw.org.uk/FireSafety.

Health and Safety Representatives may also wish to conduct a specific inspection of fire doors in their workplace.

Health and safety questions for employers

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the NASUWT produced guidance on the health and safety questions that could be posed to employers. This guidance has now been updated to make it more generic rather than COVID-19 specific, and should assist representatives in their discussions with employers and school leaders.

The updated guidance can be found at: www.nasuw.org.uk/HealthAndSafetyQuestionsForEmployers.

Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans (PEEPS)

UK legislation places duties on an employer to implement effective arrangements for emergency evacuation of all staff and pupils, including those who may need some assistance to manage their escape to a place of safety.

There have been some general, system-wide concerns that not all schools have sufficient procedures in place to a) ensure all those that require a PEEP have one and b) when PEEPs are in place, there is insufficient training/equipment/awareness for them to be effective. A PEEP is generally required where any user of a building may have difficulty evacuating in an emergency and would include staff and pupils.

NASUWT Representatives should raise this issue with employers/school leaders so they are aware of their obligations and obtain assurances that the required PEEPs are in place.

ACAS guidance on reasonable adjustments for mental health

ACAS has launched new guidance on reasonable adjustments for mental health at work for both employers and workers.

- what reasonable adjustments for mental health are;
- examples of reasonable adjustments for mental health;
- requesting reasonable adjustments for mental health;
- responding to reasonable adjustments for mental health requests;
- managing employees with reasonable adjustments for mental health; and
- reviewing policies with mental health in mind.

The full guidance is available at: **Reasonable Adjustments for Mental Health Toolkit**.

NASUWT Representatives should raise this issue with employers/school leaders so they are aware of their obligations and obtain assurances that the required PEEPs are in place.

New research into the impact of air filtration

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the importance of good ventilation and the impact that air filtration can have on airborne pathogens. However, a new paper published by New York University entitled '*Air Filters, Pollution, and Student Achievement*' has highlighted the impact that air filtration can have on student performance.

The research focuses on an accident in October 2015, where employees of the Southern California Gas Company discovered a massive leak in the Aliso Canyon natural gas storage facility. The gas leak was a huge catastrophe from the standpoint of greenhouse gas emissions, but it also naturally raised concerns in the local community about the immediate impact on public health.

Facing political pressure from concerned parents and teachers, the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) and the owner of the gas company placed air filters in every classroom, office and common area in all schools within five miles of the gas leak at the end of January 2016.

Air testing conducted around the time of the installation of the filters shows that the schools did not have abnormally high levels of the kinds of pollution that are normally associated with natural gas. Methane is lighter than air, and by the time the filters were installed — nearly three months after the leak — the extra pollution caused had dispersed and was not affecting school buildings.

Consequently, the installation of the filters served not to remove extra contamination caused by the leak, but simply to clean up the normal amount of background indoor air pollution present. That allowed an estimate in the difference in student performance for schools just inside the boundary compared to those just outside.

The study found that maths scores went up by 0.20 standard deviations and English scores by 0.18 standard deviations, and the results hold up even when controls for 'detailed student demographics, including residential ZIP code fixed effects that help control for a student's exposure to pollution at home' are applied. These improvements are equivalent to those found by reducing class size by one third.

The impact of the air filters is strikingly large, given what a simple change enacted — the school authorities just installed commercially available filters. It should also be noted that the area is not one that suffers from high levels of air pollution, making the impact more striking.

The study clearly shows that a relatively minor change could not only have significant benefits for the health and safety of staff and pupils, it could have a significant impact on standards as well.

NASUWT Representatives may wish to use this research to further press employers/school leaders on the installation of air filtration systems in workplaces.

RAAC

Issues around Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) were raised in the autumn term bulletin (available on the health and safety page of the NASUWT website: www.nasuw.org.uk/HealthAndSafety). Since this bulletin, the NASUWT has become aware of a number of schools that have had to close due to issues discovered with RAAC on their sites. All schools should check whether they have RAAC present, and if so, ensure that a thorough survey is undertaken.

Further information is available at: www.local.gov.uk/topics/housing-and-planning/information-reinforced-autoclaved-aerated-concrete-raac.

Health and Safety Representatives should ensure that school leaders are aware of the DfE/LGA guidance (link above) and have taken the required steps.

New NASUWT guidance

In addition to the guidance mentioned above, the NASUWT has reviewed/published the following guidance since the last bulletin:

Revised Guidance on Health and Safety Committees in Employers and Schools

Health and Safety Guidance on Class Sizes

Teachers Moving Between Sites

Teachers Without a Permanent Classroom Base

Guidance on the Use of Dogs on School Sites



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