



State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations  
**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**  
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## HEALTH AND SAFETY IN SCHOOL FACILITIES

The Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) is guided by what is in the best interest of students and this includes ensuring that our students have safe and healthy school facilities. Thank you for all the work you undertake to make certain that the facilities in your district provide high quality learning environments with appropriate indoor environmental quality.

The condition of our school facilities is crucial to the health of students and staff, as well as a key component of ensuring high levels of student and teacher performance. Because we understand that establishing and maintaining high standards for indoor environmental quality requires ongoing maintenance and operations efforts, RIDE has collected the following guidance and resources for school districts:

### [Building Inspections](#)

Per RIGL §16-21-3, by August 1st of each year school facilities must be inspected by local or state building inspectors and fire chiefs, as well as other authorities having jurisdiction. This and many other health and safety requirements are included in the [Rules and Regulations for School Health Programs](#).

### [Asbestos Control](#)

The [Rhode Island Asbestos Act](#) defines schools as high-priority buildings and requires inspection of these buildings by the Department of Health. While regulations do not require asbestos removal from schools, building materials containing (or presumed to be containing) asbestos must be identified and properly maintained. The 1986 Asbestos Hazard Emergency Response Act, which is additional federal legislation, applies to both school districts (or Local Education Agencies) and individual schools.

### [Radon Control](#)

Radon Control is governed by [RIGL 23-61-7](#) and the [RI Rules and Regulations for Radon Control](#) require radon testing in all public and high priority buildings.

### [Emergency Preparedness](#)

RIGL §16-21-3 requires LEAs to work with local police and fire departments to conduct a school safety assessment and emergency plans and procedures. A [model safety plan](#) is available at RIDE's website. The assessment may identify necessary capital improvements to ensure student and staff safety.

### [Healthy Learning Environments](#)

[Asthma](#) is one of the leading causes of school absenteeism. Poor indoor air quality is an asthma trigger and is often tied to facility maintenance. These issues can often be corrected as part of asset protection and capital improvement activities.

### Tools for Schools – Indoor Environmental Management Plan

All public schools that have undertaken construction, repairs, and/or renovation with approvals after May 2007 must implement an Indoor Environmental Management Plan that includes stakeholder engagement, an integrated pest management plan, and checklists for cleanliness and maintenance. The [walkthrough inspection checklist](#) posted on RIDE's website is a useful tool for identifying potential indoor environmental quality issues.

### Integrated Pest Management Plan

Integrated pest management (IPM) includes a set of techniques that are used to exclude pests from buildings and to destroy the habitat of pests by limiting their access to food, water, and free movement without dependence upon chemicals that are harmful to human health. Regular monitoring and record keeping is used to determine when treatments are needed to keep pest numbers low enough to prevent damage. Pesticide application in schools is governed by [RIGL §23-25-37](#).

### Northeast Collaborative for High Performance Schools Protocol

The NECHPS protocol has several policy and operations prerequisites and credits regarding indoor environmental quality, including a requirement that district's develop a maintenance master plan, adopt a bus idling policy, and minimize mercury exposure by purchasing low mercury lamps and thermostats.

The [Northeast-CHPS Operations and Maintenance Guide](#) provides guidance to school districts on developing and maintaining procedures that ensure the continued operation of school facilities in a manner consistent with the goals of NECHPS. High performance schools provide high-quality learning environments, conserve natural resources, consume less energy, are easier to maintain, and provide an enhanced community resource.

### School Cafeteria Inspections

The Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act of 2004 mandated a set of federal food safety requirements for schools participating in the National School Lunch or School Breakfast Program.

School districts are currently required to provide annual documentation of compliance with regulatory requirements such as up-to-date building and fire official inspections, asbestos plans, radon monitoring results, and school kitchen reports.

RIDE's [Coordinated School Health Program website](#) provides a collection of applicable healthy school building laws and regulations. RIDE and the RI Department of Health are available to assist districts with any question regarding any aspects of this guidance. The following contacts are provided to assist with questions:

- Implementing Tools for Schools – Sara Tucker ([Sara.Tucker@ride.ri.gov](mailto:Sara.Tucker@ride.ri.gov))
- Radon Testing and Reporting – ([doh.radon@health.ri.gov](mailto:doh.radon@health.ri.gov))
- Coordinated School Health Program – Rosemary Reilly Chammat ([Rosemary.Reilly-Chammat@ride.ri.gov](mailto:Rosemary.Reilly-Chammat@ride.ri.gov))
- School Construction and Renovations – Keelia Kentor ([Keelia.Kentor@ride.ri.gov](mailto:Keelia.Kentor@ride.ri.gov))

Thank you for your stewardship of our public school facilities and more importantly of our State's youth.