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PETER J. OSTROSKEY
STATE FIRE MARSHAL

MEMORANDUM

TO: Heads of Fire Department

FROM: Peter J. Ostroskey
State Fire Marshal

DATE: August 1, 2016

SUBJECT: School Fire Prevention

School Fire Prevention

As we come into August, it is a good time to highlight school fire prevention once again as students and teachers prepare to return to the classroom this fall. The Division of Fire Safety has a [School Fire Prevention](#) pamphlet with references to 527 CMR1.00 Massachusetts Comprehensive Fire Safety Code. It summarizes the main fire prevention regulations and laws governing schools and can be found on the DFS website – www.mass.gov/dfs - by typing “school fire prevention” in the search box or clicking on *Fire Prevention Resources* from the Fire Safety Division’s home page. It is also included in the August 2016 issue of the *DFS Briefs*.

It covers:

- School Fire Reporting Law, M.G.L. c. 148, s. 2A;
- Multi-Hazard & EMS Plans;
- Fire drills;
- Crowd manager requirements;
- Flammability of upholstered furniture, molded chairs and re-upholstered furniture and of decorations, curtains, draperies and window treatments;
- Special issues concerning place of assembly (theatres, auditorium, gym, cafeteria), and chemistry labs;
- School wall decorations (uses of paper materials);
- Fire suppression systems;
- General housekeeping; and more.

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Multi-Hazard & EMS Plans; Bomb Threat Protocols

Section 363 of Chapter 159 of the Acts of 2000 M.G.L. c. 69, s. 8A requires the head of the school, fire and police departments to meet each year prior to the start of school to review and revise multi-hazard and EMS plans. Taking the *School Fire Prevention* pamphlet to that annual meeting could be helpful in discussions with school staff on the fire safety requirements.

Bomb Threat Response Guidance

Last year, a working group of fire, school, local police and the State Police Bomb Squad developed a *Bomb Threat Guidance Document* after experiencing a spike in such threats and a variance in local community's plans for response. Multi-hazard plans should include *Bomb Threat Response Plans* that spell out how all three agencies will work together when responding to school bomb threats. Since we do not want to post this pamphlet on-line, it can be obtained by contacting the Fire and Explosion Investigation Section at 978-567-3310, or the Fire Data & Public Education Unit at 978-567-3381, or the Public Information Office at 978-567-3189.

School Fire Reporting Law

Since 2006, M.G.L. c. 148, s. 2A requires the principal of any public or private school of grades 1-12 in Massachusetts to immediately report any incident involving the unauthorized ignition of any fire within the school building or on school grounds, to the local fire department. In addition, the principal must file a written report to the local fire department within 24 hours, whether or not the fire department responded. The fire department shall then report the incident to the Marshal pursuant to M.G.L. Chapter 148 § 2 (MFIRS).

The law was created to mandate that schools report fires that may have previously gone unreported. The effect will be greater protection of our children and the ability to identify possible juvenile fire setters to provide appropriate early intervention.

Use and Storage of Alcohol Based Hand Rub Preparations

The new citation in the fire code for use and storage of alcohol based hand rub preparations is: 527 CMR 1, s. 10.23.1 and is a Massachusetts amendment. It provides guidance on size, distance between dispensers and from ignition sources such as electric outlets, appliances and open flames.