

# Illinois Association of Regional Superintendents of Schools

## Building Safety – January, 2016

One of the primary responsibilities of Regional Offices of Education (ROE) and Intermediate Service Centers (ISC) is that of assisting districts with meeting ISBE Health/Life Safety (HLS) requirements and completing yearly safety inspections of school buildings. State-wide, ROEs and ISCs complete a full inspection of every public school building and also many private/parochial school facilities. Although state code compliance is primary, ultimately the intent is to help districts increase student safety and decrease liability by identifying areas of concern or potentially unsafe situations. Guidance is provided by our offices for correcting the various situations.

ROEs and ISCs are more frequently working in conjunction with the Office of the State Fire Marshal (OSFM) and local fire departments for building inspections. While schools must follow specific code requirements that differ somewhat from municipalities, this relationship is beneficial due to having additional expert eyes in our schools. Doing so helps breed fire department familiarity with local building layouts and is a great way for schools, students and community fire fighters to develop a relationship. This also provides an avenue for many schools to segway into school and community programs for home and school safety through classroom curricula.

### Reminders:

#### Daisy Chaining

Unless you are an electrician and truly understand electricity, it's easy to improperly use extension cords and power strips. Most of don't realize how easily these can become overloaded and what the ramifications of overloading are. The bottom line result of improperly connecting extension cords or powerstrips = **FIRE!**

With school holiday/vacation time, custodial crews are often busy cleaning and moving classrooms. When this happens, rooms can get reconfigured and some common HLS errors can occur. Here are a few tips.

- Extension cords should...
  - be commercial grade and rated for the maximum load placed upon them
  - be used with only one appliance (lamp, computer, projector, etc.)
  - plug directly from the appliance into a wall receptacle
  - not be used to make a powerstrip cord longer – do not use one with a powerstrip
- Powerstrips should:
  - be commercial grade and rated for the maximum load placed upon them
  - never be daisy chained (connected to each other)
  - plug directly into a wall receptacle (no extension cord to make it longer)
  - contain a built-in disconnect if overloaded (fuse/breaker)
- Extension cords and powerstrips are considered temporary and should never be used in a situation which calls for a permanent wiring solution. They should be unplugged at the end of each day.

[Click here for FastFacts – Powerstrips and Dangerous Daisy Chains](#)

#### Retaining Hallway Width (egress)

In any school, hallways or corridors can easily become collection areas (desks, chairs, paper boxes, etc.). It is required that hallways remain clear for emergency evacuation and to eliminate trip hazards. The code is longer and very specific, but here are some basic guidelines.

- Hallways...
  - should not be used for storage unless having sprinklers or smoke detectors
  - need to retain passing width (egress) at all times. A quick and simple way to check is to look down the hall at the exit doors. Minimally, the full width of those doors should be the **least** amount of pathway through the entire hallway or corridor.
  - should have no more than 20% of wall space covered by artwork or teaching materials