

## School Environmental Health and Safety Rule 2024-2025

### Recommended New Draft Rule Frequently Asked Questions

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#### The New Draft Rule

Chapter 246-370 WAC sets minimum environmental health and safety standards for schools. The new draft rule will establish modern, statewide standards for K-12 school facilities. Chapter 246-370 WAC is intended to replace the current chapter 246-366 WAC, which is over 60 years old.

#### Q Why is this new rule needed?

- A The current rule (chapter 246-366 WAC) is outdated and is not based on the most recent science or building and operating standards. The changes in the draft rule will help ensure that schools are healthier and safer places for children.

#### Q What is the phased implementation and why is the Board recommending it?

- A The State Board of Health (Board) has recommended phased implementation to balance student health and safety with cost mitigation for schools and local health jurisdictions. A phased approach will also allow the Board to review costs for each phase of rulemaking.
- A Focuses on making plans and laying the foundation for future changes. Includes sections that do not make substantive changes to the rule, set out basic WAC structures (such as definition and applicability sections), and require the development of plans (such as the extreme temperature readiness plan).
- Phase 1: Focuses on activities that require collaboration between school officials and local health jurisdictions (such as inspections and assessments).
- A Brings schools into full implementation, including new rule requirements such as specialized rooms.

#### Q Where can I read the new draft rule?

- A You can read the draft rule in the final report: [WAC 246-370 School Environmental Health and Safety Rule Report 2025-06-30 0.pdf](#). The draft rule text includes a key that identifies the implementation phase for each section.

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### **Q Which schools does this new rule apply to?**

A This draft rule applies to all public and private school facilities that:

- Are operated for the primary purpose of providing K-12 education
- Include primary and secondary school facilities that offer preschool education or transition services

This draft rule does not apply to:

- State-Tribal education compact schools
- Facilities that are licensed and regulated by the Washington State Department of Children, Youth and Families, including preschools and daycare centers not associated with a K-12 schools
- Home-based schools

### **Funding**

The technical advisory committee and the board identified funding as an important consideration for fully implementing the draft rule.

### **Q Where will funding come from to implement this rule?**

A Public schools will need funding from the Legislature. Private schools rely on funding from private individuals and organizations (e.g. tuition, donations). Local health jurisdictions may be funded through federal, state, or county resources and some jurisdictions may collect fees from schools for inspections and reviews.

### **Q Where can I find more resources for funding?**

A The [OSPI Policy & Funding](#) and [OSPI Grants](#) pages describe programs that are available to schools.

### **Q Which organizations may have information related to environmental health and safety?**

A Organizations that may have additional resources and technical information include:

- Washington Association of Maintenance and Operation Administrators ([WAMOA](#))
- Washington Association of School Administrators ([WASA](#))
- Washington State Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction ([OSPI](#))
- Washington State Department of Health ([DOH](#))
- U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention ([CDC](#)).

**School Environmental Health and Safety Rule 2024-2025****Rule Requirements**

The scope of the rule is specific to environmental health and safety within schools. In some cases, other rules address specific health and safety standards that apply to schools.

**Q Is drinking water covered in this rule?**

No. The quality of drinking water is not addressed in this rule. Drinking water requirements are covered by other rules and laws:

- [Chapter 246-290 WAC Group A Public Water Supplies](#)
- [Chapter 246-291 WAC Group B Drinking Water Systems](#)
- [RCW 28A.210.410 Lead contamination at drinking water outlets](#)
- [RCW 43.70.830 Lead contamination in drinking water in school buildings—Sampling and testing—Data-sharing agreement](#)

**Q Does the rule address indoor air quality in schools?**

A Yes. The draft rule includes a section on Indoor Air Quality and Ventilation. Phase 1 of the rule development plan requires schools to develop and implement written indoor air quality plans within five years of the effective date of the Indoor Air Quality and Ventilation rule section. Indoor air quality plans must include the identification of areas of concern, preventive measures to address those concerns, a routine inspection schedule for HVAC systems, an integrated pest management plan, a plan for ensuring health and safety when outdoor air quality is poor, and a plan to monitor and address carbon dioxide levels (CO<sub>2</sub>), if applicable. Additional indoor air quality concerns will be addressed in Phase 3.

**Q Will a school have to replace or install a new HVAC system to meet the rule requirements for indoor air quality?**

Q No. A school will not have to replace or install a new HVAC under the draft rule. Schools must develop an indoor air quality plan and are encouraged to use the Department of Health guidelines to follow best practices. New construction may require an HVAC to meet temperature and indoor air quality standards.

**Q What is an HVAC test and balance?**

A The test and balance of an HVAC system involve measuring and balancing the heating, ventilation, and air conditioning systems. The goal is to achieve the right airflow, temperature, and humidity levels in a building or space. The process is typically done by certified professionals and requires specialized equipment to measure and adjust the HVAC systems. The draft rule requires testing and balancing every 15 years.

**Q Do schools need to close when indoor temperatures are outside the ranges in the rule?**

A No. The draft rule does not require schools to shut down at that point. Instead, schools must implement their extreme temperature readiness plan that they will develop with the help of the local health jurisdiction. The plan may include short-term solutions to address the temperature and additional temperature ranges that indicate when the school should close. The readiness plan is designed for the unique characteristics of each school facility.

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### **Q Are Corsi-Rosenthal Boxes an option to provide better indoor air quality?**

- A The draft rule does not forbid or recommend Corsi-Rosenthal boxes. While these DIY filtration systems may be less expensive and more effective than retail room air filters, they are designed as a short-term solution to poor indoor air quality. Schools and local health jurisdictions should consider the following:
- Someone will need to replace the filters as frequently as every four months—replacement includes dismantling and rebuilding the box from scratch.
  - The boxes take up space in a classroom and may be an obstruction.
  - The sound from the fan can interfere with hearing—especially for those seated closest to the fan.
  - Higher-rated filters required by building code reduce the air circulation from the boxes.
  - The filters can remove particulates (such as smoke, pollen, and airborne pathogens) from the air but do not remove harmful gases (such as CO<sub>2</sub> or Radon).

### **Q Can teachers or parents bring household cleaning materials to school?**

- A No. The draft rule requires that the school provide cleaning supplies that meet state and federal guidelines. Household cleaners may interact with other cleaners, causing a safety hazard, or may affect students with allergies or asthma.

## **Safety Concerns**

The technical advisory committee identified that the effectiveness of this draft rule relies on the collaboration between schools, local health jurisdictions, teachers, parents, and students. Safety is everyone's concern.

### **Q What can I do if I see something that doesn't look safe or healthy?**

- A Please contact your school first to see if they can resolve your concern, and then you may wish to contact the school district. Additional support may be available at your local [Educational Service District](#) or by reaching out to your local health jurisdiction. You may want to discuss your concerns with your School Board.

### **Q What if a school can't meet the standards?**

- A The draft rule allows for variances and emergency waivers, and a process to appeal decisions of the local health officer. The phased implementation encourages collaboration between local health jurisdictions and schools to address more complex requirements.

## **Local Health Jurisdictions**

The technical advisory committee recognized that local health jurisdictions vary in program capacity and services.

### **Q How do I contact my local health jurisdiction?**

- A Visit [Washington State Local Health Jurisdictions](#) to find contact information by county.

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**Q Where can I find fees charged by local health jurisdictions?**

A Each local health jurisdiction sets their own fees. To learn more about yours, go to [Washington State Local Health Jurisdictions](#).

**Q Where can schools get the forms, guidance, and training?**

A The [Department of Health Schools](#) page offers guidance and key resources. Go to the [Health and Safety Guide for K-12 Schools in Washington State](#).

### Related Rules

The technical advisory committee acknowledged that some considerations of health and safety are already addressed in other rules and laws.

**Q What other health and safety rules have an impact on schools?**

A The following rules may have an impact on school facilities:

- Chapter 246-215 WAC Food Service
- Chapter 246-217 WAC Food Worker Cards
- Chapter 246-260 WAC Water Recreation Facilities
- Chapter 246-262 WAC Recreational Water Contact Facilities
- Chapter 246-272A WAC On-site Sewage Systems
- Chapter 246-272B WAC Large On-site Sewage System Regulations
- Chapter 246-290 WAC Group A Public Water Supplies
- Chapter 246-291 WAC Group B Public Water Supplies
- RCW 43.70.830 through 43.70.845 Lead in Drinking Water in School Buildings

This is not a complete list of all rules that may affect schools. Schools are also subject to rules adopted by the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, and other state requirements including energy efficiency, worker safety, and state building code requirements.

**Q Are there differences between this rule and to Labor & Industries (L&I) rules for protecting adults in the school?**

A Yes, there are differences. L&I rules apply to all workplaces and protect employees in Washington State and fall under the Washington Industrial Safety & Health Act, chapter [49.17 RCW](#). While students may indirectly benefit from some of these requirements, L&I rules do not address their specific needs to ensure a healthy and safe learning environment. If the two rules have different requirements on the same topic, the more stringent of the two will apply.

**Q How do these rules work with the Clean Building Performance Standard?**

A Some of the draft rule requirements may result in increased energy use to meet the minimum health and safety standards for students. This may not meet the Clean Buildings Performance Standard. During the 2025 legislative session the Legislature amended the Clean Buildings Performance Standard to allow additional exemptions and extensions

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including financial hardship for K-12 schools and when a school is actively working to adhere to the school rules.

The Clean Buildings Performance Standard requires the Department of Commerce to establish rules for energy performance standards for covered commercial buildings, to collect data on compliance, and to report on outcomes. The standard is focused on maximizing reductions in greenhouse gas emissions from buildings and setting requirements for energy use intensity targets. Learn more about the [Clean Building Performance Standard](#) and Department of Commerce rule activities.

**Q Is the K-12 Health and Safety Guide (K-12 Guide) more protective than the rule?**

A The draft rule sets minimum requirements for health and safety. The K-12 Guide includes detailed best practices for how to meet or exceed those requirements. Schools that follow best practices within the guide may achieve healthier and safer school environments.

**Q Can you share a list of state-approved vendors for projects related to these requirements?**

A As a state agency, the Board cannot refer or recommend vendors. The Department of Enterprise Services website includes a [search for contracts](#) so you can see which vendors have an active contract with the state.