

Phase 1: School Environmental Health and Safety Rule Update

What is happening?

The Washington State Board of Health (Board) is working on a new rule to set minimum environmental health and safety standards in schools serving students in grades Kindergarten through grade 12 (K-12).

Why?

[Chapter 246-366 of the Washington Administrative Code \(WAC\)](#) sets the current standards for K-12 school environmental health and safety. However, these standards are over 60 years old and outdated. In 2025, the Board published a [legislative report](#) reviewing the existing rule and proposing updates for a new rule. A technical advisory committee (TAC) helped develop this report. The TAC included people from school districts, private schools, public health, and other partners.

Why now?

The TAC recommended that the Board make new rules over three phases and proposed language for each phase. In 2026, the Legislature allowed the Board to move forward with Phase 1 of the TAC's recommended rule updates.

What is Phase 1?

The Phase 1 recommendations focus on schools developing plans for indoor air quality, radon testing, and extreme temperature readiness. Phase 1 will lay the foundation for the updates in Phases 2 and 3. Phase 2 includes school officials and local health jurisdictions working together to conduct inspections and assessments. Phase 3 adds new requirements, such as temperature ranges and specialized room standards.

What about the recommendations for Phases 2 and 3?

The Legislature is allowing Phase 1 of the school environmental health and safety rule to move forward. The Board will consider moving forward with Phase 2 recommendations after Phase 1 is adopted, and when the Legislature allows us to implement them.

Didn't the report already make new rules?

The report recommended language for new environmental health and safety standards, but the Board will need to go through the official rulemaking process before the rule goes into effect.

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Which schools will need to follow the new rule?

All public, private, and charter K-12 schools will need to follow the new rule.

How long does rulemaking take?

Most rulemaking projects take 12-18 months to complete. We hope to complete this rule and have the Phase 1 recommendations in place by July 2027.

Schools are already operating in a difficult financial environment. How much will these changes cost?

The 2025 report identified potential costs for updated rules by phase. Costs will vary depending on current school practices. For example, districts that already do radon testing will not experience new costs because of the changed rules. Part of making the Phase 1 rule involves conducting a Small Business Economic Impact Statement (SBEIS) and a cost-benefit analysis. To complete these analyses, we will be conducting cost surveys, which will give us more accurate estimates of rule costs.

What will happen to the existing school rule in Chapter 246-366 WAC?

The current rule will remain in place during this process. As Part of the Phase 1 rulemaking, the Board may consider changing or removing parts of Chapter 246-366 WAC that are no longer needed.

Where can I find more resources to keep my school clean and safe?



Scan the QR code to learn more about the Phase 1 School Rule update or visit the [Department of Health resources page](#) for guidance and tools to help keep schools clean, healthy, and safe.

Sign up to be added to our interested parties list at [School Rule Interest Form - Airtable](#).