

Safety Committee: Pam Mommau, Chair, Pammomau@comcast.net

Safety Committee resolution to be introduced at November delegates' assembly:

The Safety Committee submitted a resolution regarding building security to the November MCCPTA Board of Directors' Meeting. That resolution was approved with amendments, to be presented to the November delegates' assembly. The resolution will be introduced at the assembly, with a brief report from the Safety Committee. We are asking you to take it back to your local PTAs so that it can be voted on in the January Delegates' Assembly.

Building Security update - all visitors to schools asked to check in at the front office:

MCPS letter to principals

Deputy Superintendent Larry Bowers issued a security memo to all principals on October 31, reminding them of security requirements for their buildings. This memo was not a public announcement from MCPS, but principals are free to share it with their school communities. The memo includes instructions to keep all but one entrance to schools "secured" during the school day, including entrances to portables. It also asks principals to post signs on all doors directing any visitors (which would include parent volunteers) to stop in at the front office, sign in, and get a name tag, and instructs staff and students to report any "suspicious activity or individuals." Any ES that does not have an operational key card locking system for building access from portables are directed to report this to their field security coordinator immediately.

General information about MCPS security policy (also posted on MCCPTA website)

1. Each school is ultimately responsible for its own security plan and procedures, although all schools are required to have Code Red/Code Blue plans and drills. The central MCPS office provides guidelines, training for staff, technical assistance, and monitoring.
2. All high schools have one or more security guards and one "education facilitates officer (EFO)." Security guards are often retired police officers or military, but are not commissioned police officers. EFOs are commissioned police officers. All middle schools have at least one security guard; only two have their own EFO. No elementary school has a security guard or EFO. The HS EFO's provide advice and occasional assistance to all the schools in their cluster.
3. In general, schools are supposed to keep all doors except for their central entrance locked during the school day. The exception is those middle and high schools that have portables, which require students to move in and out of the building at each class change. All elementary schools with portables are supposed to have key card locking of the doors between the schools and the portables. Newer schools have been designed to facilitate monitoring of the central entrance from the main office. This is not possible in many older schools.
4. Visitors to schools, including parent volunteers, should wear visitor i.d. tags obtained in the central office. Signs directing visitors to the main office must be posted on all exterior doors.
5. All high schools have security cameras covering most major hallways. The extent of monitoring is uneven. Middle and elementary schools do not, by and large, have security cameras.
6. All portables are supposed to have at least an intercom connection to the main building.

Letter on emergency communication between MCPS and parents:

The Safety Committee is preparing a letter to send to MCPS requesting information about regulations and other guidelines governing communications from and MCPS and local schools to parents about emergency situations and other potential security hazards. We will keep you informed on this issue.

Update on lead-in-water remediation:

The MCPS environmental safety unit continues to work on developing and implementing plans to eliminate lead in water within the schools. Progress is slow. As of November 8, 44 schools had been "graduated" from the program, meaning either it was determined no action was required (14 schools) or action was taken, and test results revealed the problem had been solved (30 schools). There are 79 schools where remediation plans have been implemented, but they are still testing to see if the problem has been solved. This includes 9 schools that had major work done over the summer. The Safety Committee will be investigating why so many schools are still in post-testing, including investigating what the testing protocol is, and how many schools are showing unsatisfactory results. Another 60 schools haven't been remediated at all.

We are encouraging MCPS to update their website with respect to the status of each school. If you have questions about your school, you should ask your principal, or call Lynne Zarate, MCPS team leader, Environmental Services, 301-926-4378.

Focus on safety in local PT(S)A's:

The MCCPTA Safety Committee is interested in hearing from parents about their safety concerns, general and specific. We urge local PTA's to create their own separate safety committees in order to provide for more concerted focus on safety issues within each school. Please email Pammoomau@comcast.net or call me (Pam Moomau) at 301-530-9691 with your questions and commentary on school safety and security issues