

Buildings, Grounds Protection was Topic of NYSIR Symposiums



The latest NYSIR Symposium program was created to help school building maintenance professionals in districts all across New York state, so it's fitting

that the reciprocal's seventh annual event was, for the first time, delivered in two different locations.

Briefly Speaking:
NYSIR News Roundup

It Could Happen
to You

Inside Out: Effective School Building Management and Property Conservation was held July

23 in Syracuse and Aug. 1 in Tarrytown. Drawing around 100

in-person and virtual attendees, the events were cosponsored by MunichRe Specialty Insurance and designed to help school districts and BOCES defend their buildings and grounds against weather events and other elements through proactive equipment maintenance, property protection programs and loss mitigation technology.

The events were offered as a key piece of NYSIR's Property Conservation Program, which also includes the reciprocal's new Property Conservation



BUILDINGS, GROUNDS PROTECTION... CONTINUED

Each symposium began with a presentation on climate and its impacts on school buildings and property.

Manual, training modules on NYSIR Online University (NYOU), a resource center on the NYSIR website and various seminars.

Each of the two symposiums began with a presentation on climate and its impacts on school buildings and property. Remarks at the Syracuse event were delivered by Kieran Bhatia, Ph.D., chief climatologist

for reinsurer Guy Carpenter, while the Tarrytown presentation was led by Bryan Wood, senior catastrophe analyst for MunichRe Specialty Insurance.

BIG NUMBERS

Bhatia began by citing the increase in large losses in the U.S.

"There were 28 billion-dollar loss events last year, and that's a record," he said. "And in the last four years, insured losses have exceeded \$100 billion."

He said the rising loss numbers are tied to temperature increases, and that insurance premiums are being raised in response.

Bhatia then shared detailed information about increased probability and magnitude of extreme events and their estimated economic impact. He also offered improved models that show climate change already has caused losses and damage across many geographic locations and will continue to do so at a faster pace.



KIERAN BHATIA, PH.D.

In Tarrytown, Wood spoke about the perils of climate, including those most common to New York state. He cited increased rainfall from heavy precipitation events as a cause of increased flooding in the Northeast, as well as hotter and wetter conditions leading to a warmer atmosphere and more trapped heat.



BRYAN WOOD

"We're seeing record warming in the Atlantic Ocean," he said. "The result is hurricanes are getting stronger with time."

He also talked about related infrastructure vulnerabilities, especially in urban areas. Sewers built decades ago, for instance, aren't large enough to handle extreme rainfall events, and resulting increased flooding already is being seen in the Lower Hudson Valley down to New York City.

TECH SUPPORT

Adam Care, client innovation and solution leader for The Hartford Steam Boiler Inspection and Insurance Company (HSB), gave the second presentation at both events, speaking about his company's sensor program.

"The Internet of Things refers to devices with a chip that communicate over the internet," he said. "The ultimate purpose of our sensor program is to mitigate freeze- and water-related losses."

Care showed attendees some of the sensors, which collect data that is then



ADAM CARE

BUILDINGS, GROUNDS PROTECTION... CONTINUED

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transmitted to a cellular gateway and secure cloud. If the sensors detect perils such as water leaks, frozen pipes or large temperature fluctuations, users receive an alert on their phone. According to HSB, over a five-year stretch, clients of the sensor program had an average 639% return on investment. In particular, NYSIR subscribers using the technology have experienced 43 saves at a collective value of over \$2 million in losses mitigated.

The last session of the morning was on a computerized maintenance management system (CMMS) created

by HelixIntel and offered at no cost to subscribers in conjunction with HSB. Jackson Whitley, CMMS account executive with HelixIntel, gave the



JAKE WHITLEY

presentation in Syracuse, while his brother, Jake, also a CMMS account executive with the company, offered remarks in Tarrytown.

The HelixIntel system helps school districts and BOCES organize, track and maintain parts, supplies and maintenance

tasks all in one location. Both Jackson and Jake Whitley highlighted the system's ability to streamline procedures, reduce paperwork and help school personnel make cost-effective decisions. They also offered information about program features such as work requests, work

management, property management and equipment tracking.

"It's been designed from the ground up to be easy to use," said Jackson.

Another major benefit of a CMMS, according to both Whitleys, is savings. Districts and BOCES can reduce downtime and extend asset life as well as save on operational costs and time.

GETTING A FIX ON THE SITUATION

The first presentation of the afternoon for both events came courtesy of Maurice Marvi, property loss control expert from MunichRe Specialty Insurance. He went through the school calendar and offered maintenance tips relevant to each season.



MAURICE MARVI

Marvi suggested, for instance, that summer is a good time for the testing of fire protection equipment, including sprinklers, fire pumps and hydrants. Contrasting school maintenance professionals to students and teachers, he said "When you're responsible for maintenance and upkeep, you don't really have a summer vacation."

Marvi advised that when November rolls around, schools should not only keep up with their leaf control efforts, but make sure their snow removal equipment is ready for use. He also recommended that Valentine's Day serve as a reminder that equipment requires maintenance, just like human relationships, and that

BUILDINGS, GROUNDS PROTECTION... CONTINUED

electrical thermographic inspections can mitigate the chance that the wrong kind of sparks start flying.

Next came remarks by two facilities



KEITH LANGLOTZ

directors from NYSIR subscriber districts: Keith Langlotz from Williamsville Central School District, who spoke at the Syracuse event, and Robert Lorefice from Babylon Union Free School District, who presented at the Tarrytown gathering. Both talked about how schools can build a

resilient property protection program.

Langlotz divided resilience efforts into three categories: construction, technology and human. He said imperatives under



ROBERT LOREFICE

the first heading should include getting involved early with design firms in any construction process and sharing a standards list with them. From the technology perspective, he suggested that keeping up with work orders or information from a school's CMMS can help illuminate areas of potential

failure and loss. He closed by reminding attendees that their staff members are their greatest asset, and by empowering them to identify and solve building and grounds issues, the amount of data and possible solutions increases exponentially.

Lorefice put prevention initiatives under four headings: personal injury, property

damage, personal equipment damage and equipment loss. He gave detailed information about preventing slips, trips and falls; work-related accidents; sports injuries and playground injuries before moving to the second category and speaking about property damage prevention efforts related to vandalism, fire, water and pipe-freeze. Under the last two equipment-related headings, Lorefice emphasized the importance of staff training for use and maintenance of all equipment, safety inspections and proper signage, among other subjects.

Each symposium closed with NYSIR Risk Management Director Brett Carruthers highlighting elements of the reciprocal's property conservation program, including the new manual, several NYOU courses on fire systems and NYSIR's

online Boiler, Machinery and Property Protection Center.

All the symposium presentations are available at nysir.org by clicking the "2024 Symposium" link under the "Events" dropdown menu, and videos of the Tarrytown sessions will be available on the website in mid-to-late September.

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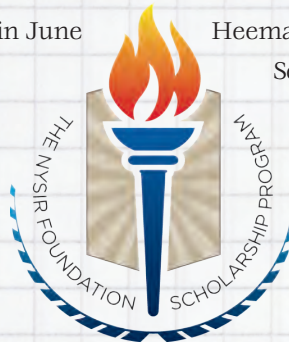
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A Roundup of Recent News Stories from NYSIR

Briefly Speaking

A Dozen Students Earn NYSIR Scholarships

Twelve students who graduated in June from NYSIR member districts recently earned scholarship awards presented annually by the NYSIR Foundation.



Heemali Patel from Herricks High School, also in the Nassau region.

The *Cristin Ann Bambino Memorial Scholarship* is given annually to special education students in honor of their determination to successfully overcome challenges, complete high school and move on to college. The grand

prize of \$5,000 was awarded to Samantha Caivano of Clarkstown High School in the Lower Hudson region, and the runner-up award was given to Amer Armbruster from Honeoye Falls-Lima High School in the Rochester/Syracuse region. Six other winners of \$3,000 awards

included Sasha Dennis from Jericho High School in the Nassau region, Kaitlin Baker of William Floyd High School in the Suffolk region, Devyn Kelly from Beacon High School in the Mid-Hudson region, Liliana Marin of Beekmantown High School in the North Country region, James O'Connor of Hamburg High School in the Greater Buffalo region and Nicholas Bonsignore from Watkins Glen High School in the Southern Tier region.

The NYSIR Foundation has awarded over \$800,000 in scholarships to students across the state over the past 17 years.



JOSEPH GONCALVES
AND EVA MESSINGER

The *Paul Jensen Memorial Scholarship* was created in memory of a NYSIR marketing representative known for his craftsmanship and is given each year to two students who have demonstrated remarkable design and building skills and have plans to refine them in college. This year's grand prize award of \$5,000 was presented to Eva Messinger of

Iroquois High School in the Greater Buffalo region, and the \$3,000 runner-up award was given to Jackson Merine from Hudson Valley P-TECH in the Lower Hudson region.



ROBERT BAMBINO
AND SAMANTHA CAIVANO

The *Joseph Goncalves Student Humanitarian Scholarship*, named for the current foundation president, is given each year to two New York-college-bound high school seniors involved in an organization or cause promoting social justice, equal opportunity, relief of human suffering or another humanitarian issue. The 2024 grand prize award went to Armaan Singh from Division

Avenue High School in the Nassau region, and the runner-up prize was earned by



JOSEPH GONCALVES
AND ARMAAN SINGH

Education.

It's a complicated enterprise. Faculty. Staff. Students. Supplies. Transportation. Buildings and grounds. With seemingly a thousand things demanding attention all at once, risk management is bound to slip to the bottom of the list every once in a while, right? Here's why it shouldn't, and why it's important to remember...

It Could Happen to You.

Over the years countless students have played "Steal the Bacon," a classic no-contact team game offered in school gym classes, without experiencing even the most insignificant of injuries.

Over the years countless students have played "Steal the Bacon," a classic no-contact team game offered in school gym

classes, without experiencing even the most insignificant of injuries. But would a NYSIR subscriber district find itself out of the frying pan and into the fire when one student participating in the activity falls and breaks her wrist, leading to a lawsuit?

The activity involves two teams lined up on either side of the gym and an item placed equidistant from the two sides. The action begins when a number is called and the player from each side assigned that number attempts to

capture the item and return it to their team. The student carrying the "bacon" can earn a point by returning it to their team, and the other student can earn a point by ripping a tear-away flag from the belt of the student holding the bacon.

The incident in question began when two students collided as they attempted to retrieve the target, causing one to fall on her wrist, producing immediate pain. She got up quickly and told one

of the two PE teachers what happened and was sent immediately to the nurse's office, where she was treated with ice and a sling. After being picked up early from school by her mom, the student was taken to a local hospital for x-rays, which revealed a broken wrist.

Subsequent to the injury, the plaintiff's mother filed suit against the district, claiming negligence that led to her daughter's wrist injury, a lumbar sprain and related depression, headaches and anxiety.

A PIG IN A POKE?

Despite the claims of negligence, there was

reason to believe the incident could not have been reasonably prevented by the school. According to pre-trial testimony, PE teachers told students prior to the game that no physical contact would be allowed – a fact acknowledged by the plaintiff. Additionally, the student reported no hostilities with anyone in her gym class that day, nor was she being bullied. She went on to testify that



she believed her collision with the other student came about because they were focused on retrieving the bacon and didn't see the other one coming. The plaintiff also stated that nothing on the gym floor caused or contributed to the collision or fall.

The lumbar sprain was never substantiated, and the wrist injury did not require surgery, only a cast the plaintiff wore

defense attorneys filed a motion for summary judgment, arguing the matter involved a sudden and spontaneous occurrence. The motion was denied, however, with the court finding two issues of fact – one as to whether the specific way the game was played could have made a collision between students seem likely, and the other as to

whether adequate supervision was provided.

SAVING THE DISTRICT'S BACON

On appeal, however, the district was victorious. An appellate court found that the school provided adequate supervision and instruction, and that the activity in question was age-appropriate for the plaintiff. The denial of summary

judgment was reversed, and the complaint was dismissed.

THE LESSON?

While accidents can happen during games like Steal the Bacon, unsupportable claims of negligence can lead to egg on a plaintiff's face.

It could happen to you.

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for a few weeks. When it was removed, additional x-rays revealed the wrist looked fine, and a physical therapist reported the student was doing well after multiple sessions. She also returned to gym class immediately after her cast came off.

Based on the student's testimony that her injury was caused by accidental contact with another student, district

A Roundup of Recent News Stories from NYSIR, continued

Pet Project: When Can Dogs be Allowed in Schools?

With students about to return in the fall, it's important to get a handle on the distinctions relating to service animals, therapy dogs and emotional-support animals.

In an article recently published by the New York State Council of School

Superintendents (NYSCOSS), NYSIR Director of Risk Management Brett Carruthers addressed the key differences between service animals, therapy dogs and emotional-support animals, and what districts and BOCES should do when a request is made for an animal to be brought to school.

"With students about to return in the fall, it's important to get a handle on the distinctions relating to those animals," says Carruthers. "Doing so

will allow schools to strike the right balance between maintaining a safe environment for students and staff, and providing necessary individual accommodations."

A service dog is trained to assist a person with a physical, sensory, psychiatric or intellectual disability. If a district or BOCES has an employee who requires a service animal, appropriate team members in the school should work out a plan to

ensure the individual has the support he or she needs.

By contrast, a therapy dog is trained and certified to work with its handler to give emotional support, comfort or companionship. Many districts are utilizing those animals for social-emotional learning programs, reading programs, stress reduction initiatives or support for students with mental health issues. A strong board of education policy should be the starting point for any therapy dog program, and input from NYSIR's risk management team also is integral to maximize safety and reduce the chance of loss.

An emotional-support animal, while capable of providing comfort to a person, has no specific task to perform and has not

necessarily received any special training. As such, schools have no obligation to allow them on their grounds or in buildings.

For more information about service animals, therapy dogs or emotional-support animals, contact Carruthers at (716) 282-4890 or bcarruthers@wrightinsurance.com.

