



Pennsylvania Department of the

AUDITOR GENERAL

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Auditor General DePasquale to Enhance School Safety Reviews

HARRISBURG – Auditor General Eugene DePasquale today said he will make significant changes to how his department reviews safety at Pennsylvania’s schools.

“Given that my team has been reviewing school safety issues for more than a decade, now is an appropriate time to assess how we evaluate school safety and make changes where appropriate so that students can feel safe while they learn,” DePasquale said. “When it comes to the safety of students, teachers and staff, I am – and will always be – proactive.”

Following the Nickel Mines Amish School shooting in 2006, the Department of the Auditor General added a school safety component to its school audit objectives.

“In the years since we began to look at school safety as part of our full school audits, we have found that schools are very receptive to our recommendations,” he said. “In particular, most schools have emergency preparedness plans in place that are constantly being reviewed and shared with first responders. However, we still see areas where improvements are needed in school safety.”

The most common audit safety recommendations involve issues with visitor procedures, staff training, practice drills, building entrances and exits, communication and alarm systems, buses and parking, and general building and grounds security.

In particular, auditors have found:

- Lack of single point of entry and exit.
- Unlocked and unoccupied classrooms, gyms and auditoriums.
- Lack of annual practice drills involving first responders.
- School grounds not patrolled by a school resource/ security officer.
- Failure to provide annual training on the emergency plan procedures with all staff.
- Exterior doors not numbered or otherwise labeled on the outside to assist emergency responders.
- No alarm systems on exterior doors.
- No assigned or designated staff, student and visitor parking.
- No signs directing visitors to the main office.
- Delivery logs not maintained.
- Central security alarm not active during school hours.
- Play and recreation areas not protected with fencing.
- Vehicular access not restricted around play areas.

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School Safety Reviews

- Building entrances and exits
- Buses and parking
- Keys and identification
- Deliveries
- Monitoring and surveillance
- Building and grounds security
- Doors and windows
- Communication systems
- Visitor procedures
- Interior security during school hours
- Emergency plans, policies, and procedures

“I will visit schools to meet with students, teachers, parents, law enforcement and school administrators in order to review and make improvements in how our audits can improve the safety of our schools,” DePasquale said.

“We need the experience and advice of everyone if we are to ensure our schools are safe havens for student education and safe from dangerous people intent on doing harm,” he said. “I especially look forward to hearing the thoughts and ideas of students.”

DePasquale said he would also look at how the school construction and renovation process incorporates school safety concerns in planning for those projects.

“Pennsylvania taxpayers spend millions and millions of dollars each year on school construction and renovation,” DePasquale said. “School safety must be part of the planning for these projects. To ignore school safety issues in these projects would be flat-out irresponsible.”

As part of the stepped-up school safety efforts, DePasquale said he will:

- Immediately add school safety objectives to all school audits and reviews; and
- Expand the distribution of confidential school safety audit results – beyond the current distribution to school superintendents and school safety officers – to include the Pennsylvania State Police, Attorney General and local police departments.

“The most students should ever have to worry about in school is a pop quiz in algebra class,” DePasquale said. “Students should never have to worry whether they will be able to survive the school day unharmed. It is up to all of us to make safe schools a reality.”

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