

In December 2009, the Worcester Public Schools entered into a Settlement Agreement with the Massachusetts Attorney General and the state Department of Environmental Protection in order to resolve a civil lawsuit concerning the handling of asbestos within the district. A section of the Settlement Agreement requires the Worcester Public Schools to engage consulting services to develop a comprehensive Environmental Management System (EMS).

The WPS has contracted with the University of Massachusetts at Lowell and a state-contracted vendor (Lynn Rose) to serve as the independent EMS consultants. The entire district leadership has participated in the initial kick-off meeting and a 16-member steering committee has been formed and training and development of the EMS has begun. Brian Allen, Chief Financial and Operations Officer, and James Bedard, Facilities Director, are co-chairing the steering committee work with the consultants.

In accordance with the settlement agreement, the consultants have developed the following timetable of activities:

By July 2010, it is expected that the EMS Committee and school district will:

- Use the Healthy Schools Checklist
- Develop written environmental management programs to manage 3 issues (asbestos, hazardous materials/emergency response, hazardous waste/emergency response) with the addition of a fourth area to be identified by the district. Pollution prevention and toxic use reduction will be incorporated into each segment.
- Train team and others on EMS and specific environmental programs.
- Develop an EMS manual that includes written standard operating procedures and policies to address the required elements of a consent order with the Commonwealth.

By September 2011, it is expected that the EMS Committee and school district will:

- Continue to use the Healthy Schools Checklist to focus on issues from a system-wide perspective
- Develop additional environmental management programs (e.g. integrated pest management, indoor air quality, drinking water, energy, blood-borne pathogens, radon, solid waste/source reduction/recycling)
- Begin to focus on individual schools using the Healthy Schools Checklist to benchmark compliance status and develop school-specific and operational controls to manage environmental, health and safety issues.
- Begin regular self-inspections for compliance
- Begin regular third-party compliance inspections
- Develop protocol for review of the management system and conduct a "pre-review" and "review"
- Make adjustments and plan next cycle for continuous improvement of EMS.

The Consultants/Facilitators are:

Madeline Snow, Director, UMass Lowell EMS Service Program

Lynn Rose, Environmental, Health and Safety expert, State-contracted vendor.

Note: UMass Program and Lynn Rose work together in collaboration on EMS projects with municipalities and school districts.