

U.S. EPA honors Los Angeles Unified School District

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U.S. EPA honors Los Angeles Unified School District for its leadership in protecting the health, safety and environment of Los Angeles area students

LOS ANGELES - At the Valerio Street Elementary School in Van Nuys, Calif., the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency today recognized the Los Angeles Unified School District for its pioneering activities in establishing a comprehensive school health and safety inspection program which has become a national model.

"We are pleased that our comprehensive school health and safety inspection program has become a national model. This has been a very effective approach to ensure the safety of students and staff at our schools," said LAUSD Superintendent Roy Romer.

"At a scale previously unheard of, the Los Angeles Unified School District has become a national leader by improving environmental health for nearly 1 million children." said Wayne Nastri, Regional Administrator, EPA Region 9. "EPA's Healthy School Environments Assessment Tool builds on LAUSD's efforts and will lead to healthier learning environments throughout the Nation."

EPA recently released a National tool based on the LAUSD model. There are approximately 120,000 public, private, charter, and tribal schools in the United States, and many of them contain hazards that may pose risks to children and staff. The Healthy School Environments Assessment Tool (Healthy SEAT) can improve the health of students and staff by ensuring that all potential environmental and safety hazards in schools are being properly managed. Examples of school environmental hazards include chemical releases, pesticide exposures, flaking lead paint, mold and other indoor air quality problems, and damaged asbestos-containing building materials.

Healthy SEAT helps school districts voluntarily assess and track health problems in students and staff; school closures due to spills or accidents; costly building clean-ups; and federal or state enforcement actions.

After touring the Valerio Elementary School, EPA Regional Administrator Wayne Nastri provided Los Angeles Unified School District Superintendent Roy Romer a Healthy School Environments Assessment Tool award honoring the school district's commitment and leadership.

The LAUSD's other environmental health and safety initiatives include:

- A comprehensive environmental review for all proposed school sites to be constructed as part of a \$14 billion New School Construction Program throughout the Los Angeles area. This LAUSD initiative spurred State legislation to ensure the safety of proposed school sites, and has become a national model.
- Development of a "Model Safe School Plan", which standardizes safe school plans throughout the District and minimizes the time required for annual updates.
- An Integrated Pest Management policy, which emphasizes non-chemical methods to manage pest problems at school and office sites, reducing the number of pesticides used on school grounds from 120 to 35 products;
- Implementation of Indoor Air Quality (IAQ) Tools for Schools, which uses EPA funds and EPA staff on LAUSD's IAQ Advisory Committee;
- Identification of potential "high risk" facility sharing a property boundary with LAUSD schools as well as documenting all industrial facilities within a 500-ft radius of each school.
- A landmark recycling program for construction debris to reuse demolition wastes. LAUSD ships these materials to a manufacturer for reuse in new products. In 2003, LAUSD recycled more than 30 million pounds of concrete and asphalt.
- A District-wide recycling program that has: reused pallets which has saved LAUSD more than \$77,400 in purchasing costs and \$11,800 in disposal costs; changing the way it serves cafeteria food which has saved \$620,800 in food disposal costs; and grasscycling which has saved \$395,800 in yard trimmings disposal costs. The District also recycles mixed paper, corrugated cardboard, and beverage containers in schools and began an electronics recycling program in 2003.
- A \$25,000 grant from the EPA leveraged LAUSD funds and resulted in 44 school chemical cleanouts and the removal of 3,284 pounds of chemicals.

For more information, please visit:

<http://www.epa.gov/schools/>