

Safety First Newsletter

NMPSIA Risk Services News & Updates

Summer 2022



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School Threat Hoaxes are on the Rise

Tensions remain high in the wake of the tragic mass shooting at Robb Elementary School in Uvalde, Texas. Adding to that stress, according to the FBI, is the rise in hoax school threats that often follow such a high-profile event.

Here in New Mexico, the FBI reports there have been 19 threats made so far in 2022, resulting in three arrests. While most of them have turned out to be hoaxes, there is a price to be paid:

- loss of taxpayer money
- draining of law enforcement resources
- distress or injury inflicted on first responders and victims
- potential felony conviction for a young person that follows them into adulthood

Issuing a threat – even over social media, via text message or through email – is a federal crime and can lead to as much as a five-year federal prison sentence, not to mention the potential for state or local charges.

“The Bureau and its law enforcement partners take each threat seriously. We need to investigate and fully analyze each threat to determine its credibility,” says FBI Deputy Director David Bowdich.

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School Threat Hoaxes are on the Rise (Continued)

What Should I Do?

- Don't ever post or send any hoax threats online...period.
- If you are a target of an online threat, alert your local law enforcement immediately.
- If you see a threat of violence posted on social media, immediately contact local law enforcement or your local FBI office. Members of the public can always submit a tip to the FBI at tips.fbi.gov or by calling the FBI at 1-800-CALL FBI
- Notify authorities but don't share or forward the threat until law enforcement has had a chance to investigate—this can spread misinformation and cause panic.
- If you are a parent or family member, know that some young people post these threats online as a cry for attention or as a way to get revenge or exert control. Talk to your child about the proper outlet for their stress or other emotions, and explain the importance of responsible social media use and the consequences of posting hoax threats.

The Heat is On!

There is just no escaping New Mexico's hot, dry weather. We also know temperatures will stay high, for many, well into the Fall. The associated health dangers are also real and growing. New research in the Journal of the American Medical Association found an increase in summer days where it felt like 90 degrees or hotter was associated with an average of 1,373 extra deaths each year.

It is never too late to start planning for how to best care for your employees under these adverse conditions. According to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), roughly 3 out of every 4 heat fatalities happen during the first week of work. Dangerous heat exposure can happen indoors or outdoors, but there are some things you can do to keep you and your workers safe:

- Follow the 20% rule – on your first day on the job, or back on the job, don't allow employees to work more than 20% of a shift at full intensity in the heat. Increase that time no more than 20% a day until workers are used to the conditions.
- Provide cool drinking water – encourage workers to drink at least one glass of water every 20 minutes, even if they are not thirsty.
- Rest breaks – allow workers time to recover from heat in a shady, cool location.
- Dress for the heat – have workers wear a hat and light-colored, loose-fitting, breathable clothing if possible.
- Watch out for each other – encourage workers to monitor themselves and others for signs of heat illness.
- Look for any signs of heat illness – including fainting, dizziness, nausea, and muscle spasms. Act quickly if symptoms arrive, and when in doubt, call 911.
- Offer training – including on the hazards of heat exposure and how to prevent illness.

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Active Shooter Protection Now Available!

Eliminating the risk of a violent attack is impossible, but NMPSIA members now have additional protections.

In the July 2022 NMPSIA Board of Directors meeting, Poms and Associates CEO David Poms presented on a Deadly Weapons Protection policy, which was quickly approved. The policy was bound effective as of July 1, 2022.

In addition to providing liability coverage in case of a catastrophic event (up to \$3,000,000 per incident), it also covers medical expenses for victims, accidental death and dismemberment, crisis management services and counseling services.

The Heat is On! (Continued)

- Develop an Emergency Action Plan – including steps on what to do if a worker shows signs of heat-related illness.

Learn more about heat illness prevention and first aid: osha.gov/heat or download the “Prevent Heat Illness at Work” Brochure ([download here](#)).

Sun Safety at Work

Sun exposure causes skin cancer, premature aging of the skin, and cataracts.

- ☑ Cover up. Wear tightly-woven clothing that blocks out light.
- ☑ Use sunscreen. Use a sunscreen that has a sun protection factor (SPF) of at least 15.
- ☑ Wear a hat. A wide brim hat protects the neck, ears, eyes, forehead, nose, and scalp.
- ☑ Wear UV-absorbent shades. Sunglasses should block UVA and UVB radiation.
- ☑ Limit exposure. UV rays are most intense between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.

osha.gov/heat

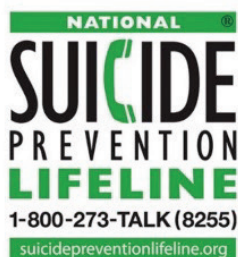


New Crisis Lifeline Goes Online

For decades, we’ve been trained to dial 911 in a physical emergency. The idea cut response times for emergency responders and saved countless lives. Now, advocates and mental health experts hope a similar idea will transform how emergency services are provided for those suffering a mental health emergency.

The 988 Suicide & Crisis Line is now up and running, meaning help is just a phone call, text, or chat away.

The new lifeline will connect callers to the existing National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, where compassionate, accessible care and support are available for anyone experiencing mental health-related distress (note: the chat feature is available only through the website: <https://988lifeline.org/chat/>). People can dial 988 if they are having thoughts of suicide, mental health or substance use crises, or any other kind of emotional distress. People can also dial 988 if they are worried about a loved one who may need crisis support.



Heat and Face Coverings

Some employees may still choose to wear a face covering at work due to a recent surge in COVID-19 variant cases. Employers should follow these best practices to protect against the risk of heat-related illness:

- Acclimatize new and returning workers to environmental and work conditions while wearing cloth face coverings.
- Increase the frequency of hydration and rest breaks in cooled environments.
- Incorporate at least 6 feet of physical distancing into break areas by staggering breaks, spacing workers, or limiting the number of workers on break at a time, where feasible.
- Enhance ventilation throughout the worksite, including in break areas, where feasible.
- If fans are used, avoid directing the fan so it pushes air over multiple people at the same time, since fans may increase the distance respiratory droplets can travel.
- Encourage workers to change cloth face coverings when wet, as wet face coverings make it more difficult to breathe and are not as effective. Provide clean replacement cloth face coverings or disposable face masks, as needed, for workers to change into throughout the work shift.
- Allow workers to wear personal passive cooling items (e.g., icepack vests, cooling bandanas) and loose-fitting and breathable clothes, as long as these items do not present a safety hazard.

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The Need for 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline:

**In 2020, the U.S.
had one death by
suicide every 11
minutes.**

**For people ages
10–34, suicide is
a leading cause
of death.**

**From April 2020
through April
2021, over
100,000 people
died from drug
overdoses.**

New Crisis Lifeline Goes Online (Continued)

Since the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline began in 2005, it has served as an invaluable resource, helping thousands of people overcome suicidal crisis or mental health-related distress every day. With this transition, those resources become even easier to reach.

988 Fast Facts

- **988 is confidential, free, and available 24/7/365, connecting those experiencing a mental health, substance use, or suicidal crisis with trained crisis counselors.**
- **Access is available through every land line, cell phone, and voice-over internet device in the United States and call services are available in Spanish, along with interpretation services in over 150 languages.**
- **The 988 dialing code is available now. The previous 1-800-273-8255 number will continue to function, however.**

Schools interested in printing materials with information on the switch to 988 can access a variety of printable materials on the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration website:

<https://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/988/partner-toolkit>

(available in English and Spanish).

Sitting vs Standing Workstations: The Great Debate

Many of us are returning to work or using a hybrid approach. Whatever approach you take to a workstation, don't forget to prioritize moving and upright posture.

Sitting for long periods of time has some health implications:

- **Reduced blood flow to the legs and brain**
- **Decreased blood vessel health**
- **Lowered production of substances that help control blood sugar levels and cholesterol**
- **Increased risk of heart disease**

Standing for long periods of time can cause the following:

- **Swelling in the feet and foot pain**
- **Vascular issues**
- **Low back pain**

The best bet to any approach in a workstation—sitting, standing, or a hybrid approach is moderation, stretch breaks, and adjust your chair and computer devices to promote neutral postures.

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Monkeypox Now a Global Health Emergency

The World Health Organization recently declared the rapid spread of Monkeypox virus a global health emergency and New Mexico is now included on the list of states with confirmed cases. With that in mind, it's important to understand exactly what monkeypox is, what you can be doing to prevent it, and what to do if a case is confirmed in your school or district.

Monkeypox is a rare disease caused by infection with the monkeypox virus, which is part of the same family of viruses as smallpox. Monkeypox symptoms resemble smallpox symptoms, although they are usually milder and less fatal. According to the New Mexico Department of Health, infection begins with flu-like symptoms, such as fever, headache, muscle aches and

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Sitting vs Standing Workstations (Continued)



Tips to Help You combat Prolonged Sitting or Standing at work

- ✓ If you can, walk during a call allows you to get some movement into your day.
- ✓ Step away from your desk at lunch. Eating at your desk while working promotes awkward postures.
- ✓ Set a timer for 30 minutes and alternate between sitting or standing.
- ✓ Use an antifatigue mat to help ease the strain of standing.
- ✓ Set an alarm on your phone or set an appointment in your calendar to remind you to take sit/stand breaks throughout the day and incorporate stretches.
- ✓ If you can't step away from your desk, you can still move and stretch from your desk chair.
- ✓ Movement is FREE and helps blood circulation through the muscles.

For any workstation it is important to get your posture right by adjusting your chair and work area to promote neutral postures. Use these pictures to guide your setup.

Title IX Rule Changes: Public Comment Begins

As a result of President Joe Biden's January 2021 *Executive Order on Preventing and Combating Discrimination on the Basis of Gender Identity or Sexual Orientation*, the Department of Education (DOE) is working to update its Title IX policies and procedures. Public Comment on these proposed changes began on July 12th and

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Monkeypox Emergency (Continued)

backache, swollen lymph nodes, chills, or exhaustion. Infection then progresses to rash or sores, often on the hands, feet, chest, face, or genitals. Most infections last 2-4 weeks and people should isolate at home until they are no longer infectious. A person is no longer infectious once all the scabs have fallen off and a fresh layer of skin is formed. Anyone who has been in close contact with someone who has monkeypox is at risk.

The CDC offers the following suggestions on preventing the disease:

- Avoid close, skin to skin contact with the monkeypox rash.
 - Do not touch the rash or scabs of person with monkeypox.
 - Do not kiss, hug, or cuddle anyone with monkeypox.
 - Do not share eating utensils or cups.
- Do not handle or touch the bedding, towels, or clothing of a sick person.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer, especially after contact with sick people.

For more information and resources, check the New Mexico Department of Health Website: <https://www.nmhealth.org/about/phd/idb/mpv/>

Title IX Rule Changes (Continued)

will last for 60 days (Link to full list or proposed changes: <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/t9nprm.pdf>)



We know these potential revisions will have a big impact on schools, and it is important you are up to date on the proposals if you wish to offer feedback to the DOE should you so choose. Here are just a few of the biggest proposed changes:

- **Expanded Definition:** DOE would adopt a definition of sex discrimination that includes discrimination based on sexual orientation AND gender identity.
- **Expanded Coverage:** The proposed rules would redefine the scope of prohibited activity from "sexual harassment" to the broader term of "sex-based harassment".
 - Legal obligations will be imposed, including a mandate for prompt response to all reports of sexual harassment.
- **Expanded Jurisdictional Reach:** The current regulations (2020) applied only to institutions' education programs and activities within the United States. The proposal would remove those limitations, meaning institutions must apply their Title IX policies and procedures to sex-based harassment that occurs outside of the U.S., such as study-abroad programs.
- **Pregnancy-related protections:** The proposed changes would clarify and expand protections for students and employees from discrimination based on pregnancy or related conditions in admissions, employment, or other education programs or activities.
 - Institutions would have obligations to provide information on pregnancy-related support measures or modifications that institutions must make available to students once informed of a student's pregnancy.

If you are interested in participating in the public comment process, you can do so on the Federal Register website:

<https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2022/07/12/2022-13734/nondiscrimination-on-the-basis-of-sex-in-education-programs-or-activities-receiving-federal>

There is also information there about how exactly to submit that feedback. Poms encourages you to review and evaluate all your non-discrimination policies and procedures considering these anticipated changes.