

# EPA REGION 6 – SOUTH CENTRAL

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## HEALTHY SCHOOLS

Serving Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, New Mexico, Texas, and 66 Tribes

### October Is Children's Health Month

#### Top Ten Ways to Make Your School Healthier

**Clear the air inside.** The EPA's Indoor Air Quality Tools for Schools program provides information and tips on how to help schools prevent and solve indoor air quality problems.

**Clear the air outside.** Schools can reduce children's exposure to engine exhaust by eliminating unnecessary vehicle idling, installing effective emission control systems on newer buses and replacing the oldest buses with new ones.

**Reduce/remove radon in school buildings.** Schools should test the level of radon gas in their buildings. No radon level is healthy. If the test results are at, or above, 4pCi/L, appropriate mitigation steps should be taken to reduce the radon level.

**Use chemicals carefully.** Possible health, safety and environmental implications should be considered before chemicals are purchased for use in schools. Do not allow outside, unauthorized chemicals to be brought into the school. Proper chemical use and management (storage, labeling, and disposal) is critical for reducing chemical exposures and costly accidents.

**Test the water.** School districts should test the drinking water in their school buildings regularly.

**Get the lead out.** School buildings built prior to 1978 must be tested for lead paint. Renovations or repairs must be done in a way that does not create lead dust. Children should be kept away from lead hazards inside and outside of school buildings.

**Eliminate Mercury.** School environments should be mercury-free. Schools should use digital thermometers and safer alternatives to mercury in science curriculum, nurses' offices and within facilities operations and maintenance.

**Cover up.** Schools should practice "sunsafe behavior" and encourage children to cover up, use SPF 30 or higher broad-spectrum sunscreen, and stay out of midday sun to avoid damaging UV rays.

**Use toxics with caution.** Schools should look for alternatives to toxic pesticides and cleaning chemicals. Remove sources of lead, mercury, asbestos, and PCBs from the school environment.

**Educate yourself.** Know which environmental health issues affect your school and how to address them.

More information can be found at <https://www.epa.gov/schools/sensible-steps-healthier-school-environments>



One Health is a collaborative, multisectoral, and transdisciplinary approach—working at the local, regional, national, and global levels—with the goal of achieving optimal health outcomes recognizing the interconnection between people, animals, plants, and their shared environment. The One Health approach is a holistic approach to advancing human well-being that recognizes that the health of people is closely connected to the health of animals and our shared environment: when we protect one, we protect all. One Health Day is November 3.

## Healthy Child Care and Early Learning Facilities Self-Assessment

Take the health of your child care centers! Use the recently updated Healthy Child Care and Early Learning Facilities Self-Assessment to ensure child care and other learning environments are safe and healthy for all your littlest learners.

The [Healthy Child Care & Early Learning Facilities Self-Assessment](#) is a free, simple to use checklist that helps you identify common environmental exposures and risks. It provides easy to implement solutions helping users tackle environmental challenges. Facilities can use this checklist quarterly to provide an environment with greater health, safety and quality for children, families, and staff. This assessment was originally created by the Community Development Institute's Healthy Environment/Healthy Children project. Originally funded by the EPA, the project was designed to implement strategies that increase awareness of the importance of environmental health in early childhood education settings.



While the assessment was created to focus on child care and early learning centers, many of the questions and resources are applicable to all learning environments – including preK-12 schools.

Learn more about [Children's Health](#) and [Healthy School Environments](#).

## America Recycles Day



On America Recycles Day (November 15), the EPA recognizes the importance and impact of recycling, which has contributed to American prosperity and the protection of our environment. The recycling rate has increased from less than seven percent in 1960 to the [current rate of 32 percent](#). Help us reach our current National Recycling Goal to increase the U.S. recycling rate to 50 percent by 2030.

The recycling efforts of communities and businesses throughout the United States help with this success and growth. To build on our progress, the EPA encourages every American to contribute by recycling right, not only on America Recycles Day, but all year long. This means checking with your local recycling provider to know what they will accept in your recycling bin. Items like cardboard, metal cans, and paper are commonly accepted by local curbside programs, and items like plastic bags, electronics and batteries do NOT go in the curbside recycling bin. Visit our [How Do I Recycle?: Common Recyclables](#) to learn how and where to recycle these and other items.

Educators: Our [Reduce, Reuse, Recycle Resources for Students and Educators](#) webpage has resources and activities for America Recycles Day are available at <https://www.epa.gov/recycle/reduce-reuse-recycle-resources-students-and-educators>.

## FY 24 Clean School Bus Program Competition

**Who is eligible:** Public school districts, public charter schools, government entities that provide bus service, eligible contractors that sell or finance clean school buses, nonprofit school transportation associations, Tribes.

**What can the funds be used for:** Provides funding to replace diesel buses with electric and cleaner alternatives.

**Anticipated opening date:** Fall 2024

## Pollution Prevention Week is September 16-22, 2024!

During Pollution Prevention (P2) Week learn how you can help the EPA reduce or prevent pollution in our communities. P2 is any action that reduces, eliminates, or prevents pollution at its source prior to recycling, treatment, or disposal.

### Resources For You

You have the power to reduce and prevent pollution. Whether it be limiting the amount of trash you generate, or simply buying products that are safer for the environment, you can make a difference.

#### What You Can Do

- [At home](#)
- [At work](#)
- [Find Safer Choice Labeled Products](#)
- [Buying Green for Consumers.](#)

## National Lead Poisoning Prevention Week is October 20-26, 2024!

Each year, National Lead Poisoning Prevention Week (NLPPW) is a call to bring together individuals, organizations, industry, and tribal, state, and local governments to reduce childhood exposure to lead by increasing lead poisoning prevention awareness. October is also [Children's Health Month](#), a time to raise awareness about children's environmental health, including the dangers and potential health impacts of lead.

NLPPW highlights the many ways parents, caregivers and communities can reduce children's exposure to lead and prevent its harmful health effects. The EPA partners with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to raise awareness about lead exposure and lead poisoning by providing resources for the public to use to encourage preventive actions during NLPPW and beyond.

Each year the EPA, HUD, and CDC work together to develop outreach materials to be used by the public to plan, promote and host events and activities during NLPPW.



## November Is Lung Cancer Awareness Month

Radon is a naturally occurring radioactive gas that can cause lung cancer. You can't see or smell radon. Testing is the only way to know your level of exposure. Radon can have a big impact on [Indoor Air Quality](#). Which Radon Zone do you live in? [Find Data and Information Regional, State, and Tribal radon programs.](#)

**Radon** is the number one cause of lung cancer among non-smokers, according to the EPA estimates. Overall, radon is the second leading cause of lung cancer. Radon is responsible for about 21,000 lung cancer deaths every year. About 2,900 of these deaths occur among people who have never smoked. On January 13, 2005, Dr. Richard H. Carmona, the U.S. Surgeon General, issued a [national health advisory on radon](#).

The National Radon Program Services at Kansas State University offers discounted test kits available to purchase online. You may complete the test kit order form electronically and print it out to mail or fax in. You may download a radon test kit coupon and mail it in.

[National Radon Program Services](#)



# NATIONAL PUBLIC LANDS DAY



## National Public Lands Day is September 28, 2024!

National Public Lands Day is organized annually and led by the [National Environmental Education Foundation](#), in partnership with the National Park Service and other federal agencies. Hundreds of thousands of volunteers roll up their sleeves to help restore and preserve public lands of all types and sizes—from iconic national parks and rivers to local urban green spaces and everything in between. National Public Lands Day is special because it provides all lovers of the environment—old and new—an opportunity to show our appreciation for these unique places. National Public Lands Day is more than a clean-up—it's a chance to connect with new communities, an event that creates kinship among those working together for a common goal, and an opportunity to use America's public lands for education, recreation, and overall physical and mental health. The theme for this year's celebration is National Public Lands Day: Together for Tomorrow. Let's join forces for a common goal, stewarding America's natural resources for future generations to enjoy. Be a part of this impactful day and help make a difference in our public lands!

## Estuaries for Everyone, National Estuaries Week is September 21-28, 2024!

Estuaries are invaluable resources for coastal dwellers, whether of fin, fur, or feather. For people, these ecosystems offer protection, recreation, and a wealth of learning opportunities. On this site, educators and estuary enthusiasts will find a variety of resources, including specially developed [activities](#), [animations](#), [videos](#), [teacher training workshops](#), [real-time data](#), and [opportunities to volunteer](#) at a local reserve. This information will help educators share the wonders of estuaries with students and others.

An estuary is a partially enclosed body of water (such as a bay, lagoon, sound, or slough) where two bodies of water, usually saltwater and freshwater, meet and mix. Freshwater estuaries occur where freshwater from a river or stream mixes with water from a lake that is chemically distinct. Scientists classify these environments using two characteristics: geology and water circulation.

## Healthy Learning Environments for Early Childcare and School Age Children: Air Quality Curriculum

As youth head back to school this fall, the learning environment is at the forefront of those invested. The Healthy Learning Environments for Early Childcare and School Age Children: Air Quality Curriculum can give educators, staff, administrators, and parents resources on how to keep youth's learning environment healthy. Good air quality is essential for a healthy learning environment and the overall well-being of children and those caring for them. Poor air quality can lead to various health issues affecting concentration, performance, and school attendance. The curriculum includes information and resources on: Air quality, Asthma, Mold, Smoking, Cleaning, Transportation and Wildfires.

Email the [swcpeh@ttuhsc.edu](mailto:swcpeh@ttuhsc.edu) for more information on how to obtain a copy for your learning environment and how to get connected with trainings for your team.



Healthy Learning  
Environments for Early  
Childcare and School  
Age Children  
Air Quality Curriculum

## Recycle City and the Planet Protectors Club



Explore [Recycle City](#) to learn how its residents reduce waste, use less energy, and even save money by doing simple things at home, at work, and in their neighborhoods. (All ages)

As a [Planet Protector](#), your mission is to improve the world around you by making less trash. You will also help other people learn to reduce, reuse, and recycle. Are you a teacher interested in starting a Planet Protector's Club in your classroom? Learn more on the [Planet Protector resource page for teachers](#). (Grades K-5)

## The Food: Too Good to Waste Tool Kit

[The Food: Too Good to Waste Toolkit](#) will help you figure out how much food is really going to waste in your home and what you can do to waste less. By making small shifts in how you shop for, prepare, and store food, you can save time and money. It can also keep the valuable resources used to produce and distribute food from going to waste!

Food: Too Good to Waste also contains an [Implementation Guide](#) that is designed to teach local governments and community organizations how to implement a Food: Too Good to Waste campaign in their community using the tool kit.

## Green Cleaning for Childcare Providers

Green cleaning refers to the use of cleaning products that have a reduced impact on human health and the environment, often because they have been reformulated to eliminate the most potentially toxic ingredients. Childcare providers recognize the important role that cleaning, sanitizing, and disinfecting can have in maintaining an attractive, safe, hygienic environment and reducing the spread of germs. But, it is important to know when cleaning is good enough and when sanitization or disinfection, which may involve harsher chemicals, is called for.

Given the growing set of state requirements promoting green cleaning in early learning environments and schools and increased availability of green cleaning products, it is important for childcare providers to know how to identify and use green cleaning products. The following links provide information about the dangers of cleaning products and the steps that can be taken to use less toxic alternatives in a childcare setting.

### Resources:

- [Informed Green Solutions - Cleaning for Health Fact Sheets](#)
- [University of California, San Francisco – Center for Child Care Health](#)
  - [Safer Cleaning, Sanitizing, and Disinfecting Products](#)
- [U.S. Department of Agriculture, Extension - Disinfect Child Care Surfaces with a Bleach and Water Solution](#)
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
  - [Safer Choice](#)



## About Safer Choice

Finding products that are safer for you, your family, and the environment should be easy — that's why the EPA developed the Safer Choice label. Everyone plays a role in protecting our families' health and the environment. Products with the Safer Choice label help consumers and commercial buyers identify products with safer chemical ingredients, without sacrificing quality or performance.

About 1,900 products currently qualify to carry the Safer Choice label. Safer Choice-certified products are available for use [in homes](#) and [in facilities like schools, hotels, offices, and sports venues](#).

Participation in the Safer Choice program is voluntary. Companies who make products carrying the Safer Choice label have invested heavily in research and reformulation to ensure that their products meet the [Safer Choice Standard](#). These companies are leaders in safer products and sustainability.

Safer Choice products must pass our stringent criteria in order to earn the Safer Choice label. The Safer Choice program reviews more than just product ingredients. We also look at product performance, pH, packaging and more to ensure that products with the label are safer for you and your family. Once a product meets the [Safer Choice Standard](#), the EPA conducts annual audits to ensure our standards continue to be met.



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Protecting human  
health and the  
environment.

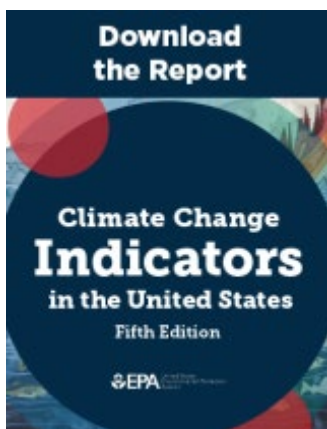


## ODDS AND ENDS

### UPCOMING NEWSLETTER

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In our next issue, the December 2024/January 2025 Region 6 Healthy Schools Newsletter will feature Radon Month and National Pesticide Safety Education Month.

Healthy Schools is published by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Region 6 - South Central in Dallas, Texas. Region 6 includes the states of Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas as well as 66 Tribes. For general information about Healthy Schools, to provide feedback on this newsletter or suggestions for future topics, or to be added or removed from the distribution list, please contact Cathy Gilmore, Senior Environmental Employee for Healthy Schools at [Gilmore.cathy@epa.gov](mailto:Gilmore.cathy@epa.gov).

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