March 2021

Issue 5

EPA Region 6—South Central

Special points of interest:

- Earth Day is April 22, 2021
- Air Quality Awareness Week in May
- National Environmental Education Week in April
- Clean Air and Asthma Awareness Week in May
- Fix a Leak Week in March
- Drinking Water Week in May
- National Ground Water Awareness Week in March
- April is Food Waste Recovery Challenge Month
- Spring Cleaning with Safer Choice
- USDA News for Educators

Helping Kids Learn in a Pollution Free Environment

April 22 is Earth Day!

Earth Day, April 22, is fast approaching. Every year, we take this opportunity to remember how important the environment is to our daily lives and pledge to do more to protect the Earth. It may be hard to imagine that before 1970, a factory could spew black clouds of toxic smoke into the air or dump tons of toxic waste into a nearby stream, and that was perfectly legal. They could not be taken to court to stop it. How was that possible? Because there was no EPA, no Clean Air Act, no Clean Water Act. There were no legal or regulatory mechanisms to protect our environment.

Since then, the Environmental Protection Agency has been created, and environmental laws and standards have been enacted to protect our environment and the health of our children and families. Every day, we are finding new solutions and new partnerships necessary to address the challenges of this century. For example, on February 19, 2021, the United States rejoined the Paris Agreement, the international treaty on climate change. Every American has a responsibility to minimize their impact on the environment. Earth Day is a great time to learn more about ways to reduce our solid waste, air pollution, and wasted water. Our website, www.epa.gov/earthday, has some great tools to help!

If every one of us will adopt the simple truth that "I can save the earth," we will realize how much we can achieve together.

William D. Ruckel-shaus, April 22, 1971, at Ohio State University

Air Quality Awareness Week is May 3-7

WHAT IS THE AIR QUALITY INDEX? The AQI is a guide for reporting daily air quality. It indicates how clean or polluted the air is and identifies health effects. EPA uses the AQI for five common air pollutants: ground level ozone, particulate matter, carbon monoxide, sulfur dioxide, and nitrogen dioxide. For each pollutant, EPA has established national air quality standards to protect against harmful health effects.

WHAT DO THE COLORS MEAN? The Flag Program uses green, yellow, orange red, and purple flags that correspond to the AQI.

WHAT IS THE SCHOOL FLAG PROGRAM? The Flag Program uses colored flags based on the AQI to notify teachers, coaches, students and others about outdoor air quality conditions. Schools raise a colored flag each day that corresponds to their local air quality forecast.

HOW WILL I KNOW WHAT COLOR FLAG TO USE? Check the AQI to know what color flag to use at www.epa.gov/airnow or subscribing to www.enviroflash.info.

Mark your calendars! The next Air Quality Awareness Week (#AQAW) will be held May 3 – 7, 2021. More to come on topics and theme for 2021 soon! In the meantime, check out the #AQAW2020 website: https://www.airnow.gov/aqaw/

Learning Links– April 19-23 is National Environmental Education Week

Environmental education is a process that allows individuals to explore environmental issues, engage in problem solving, and take action to improve the environment. As a result, individuals develop a deeper understanding of environmental issues and have the skills to make informed and responsible decisions.

The components of environmental education are:

- **Awareness and sensitivity** to the environment and environmental challenges
- **Knowledge and understanding** of the environment and environmental challenges
- **Attitudes** of concern for the environment and motivation to improve or maintain environmental quality
- **Skills** to identify and help resolve environmental challenges
- **Participation** in activities that lead to the resolution of environmental challenges

Environmental education does not advocate a particular viewpoint or course of action. Rather, environmental education teaches individuals how to weigh various sides of an issue through critical thinking and it enhances their own problem-solving and decision-making skills. Additional information can be found at https://www.epa.gov/education/what-environmental-education

The Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America (AAFA) and the MedicAlert Foundation have teamed up to raise awareness about asthma and anaphylaxis. The goal of this partnership is to help you manage your conditions and prevent life-threatening medical emergencies.

Notes for Nurses—May 3-9 is Clean Air and Asthma Awareness Week

Since 1984, the Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America (AAFA) has declared May to be "National Asthma and Allergy Awareness Month." It's a peak season for people with asthma and allergies, and a perfect time to educate patients, family, friends, co-workers and others about these diseases.

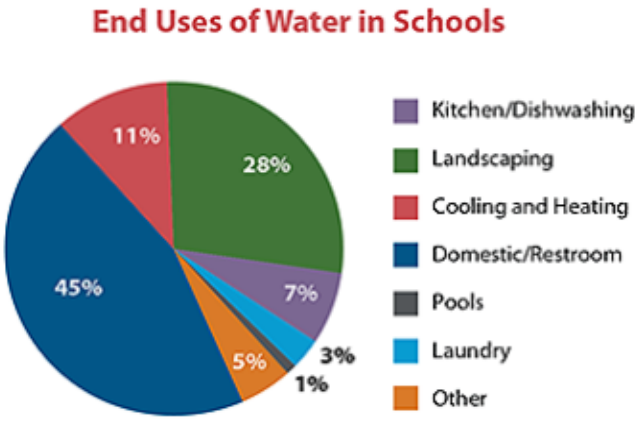
More than 60 million Americans overall have asthma and allergies.

- About 25 million Americans have asthma (19 million adults and 6.2 million children)
- About 32 million Americans have food allergies (26 million adults and 6 million children)
- About 21 million Americans have hay fever, rhinitis or nasal allergies (20 million adults and 5.6 million children)

These numbers paint a picture of how many people in the U.S. are managing asthma and allergies. But they don't paint a picture of the overall impact these diseases have on people and communities.

Custodian's Closet—March 15-21 is Fix A Leak Week

Approximately six percent of total water use in commercial and institutional facilities in the U.S. takes place in educational facilities, such as schools, universities, museums and libraries. The largest uses of water in educational facilities are restrooms, landscaping, heating and cooling, and cafeteria kitchens.



National Groundwater Awareness Week, March 7-13

National Groundwater Awareness Week is aimed at raising consciousness of the importance of groundwater in society. This year's theme is "Groundwater awareness is important to you!" Today, groundwater is more important than ever. According to the National Groundwater Association, it is estimated that 85% of the world's population live in the driest half of the planet, one in nine people do not have access to clean water, and 840,000 people die each year from water, sanitation, and hygiene-related issues.

There is also one thousand times more water underneath the Earth's surface than is present in all the world's rivers and lakes (USGS).

It is a common myth that contaminating one source of water will not affect other sources, but this is not the case, due to the hydrologic cycle. Water is always on the move! It evaporates, condenses, and precipitates back to the Earth. If one body of water gets polluted, this can lead to other bodies being contaminated due to this cycle. There are many different possible changes that water can go through during this continuous cycle, and it is our responsibility to ensure water does not get contaminated whenever possible.

Protecting groundwater sources is up to you! There are three steps to follow when considering protecting sources of groundwater:

Be Aware. Do you know where the tap water in your house comes from? Is it groundwater or surface water? What body of water does it come from? Are there potential sources of contamination located nearby?

Be Mindful. Household pollutants can lead to groundwater contamination. Consider using less of these chemicals.

Use Less. Track what the main sources of water are in your household. How can water usage be limited?

https://www.twdb.texas.gov/conservation/index.asp

https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2015-08/documents/mgwc-gwa1.pdf

Spring Cleaning with Safer Choice

With spring comes Earth Day, flowers blooming, and, of course, spring cleaning. This year, EPA Region 6 is asking that your school make the swap from one traditional cleaning product to a Safer Choice labeled alternative. You may have heard that Safer Choice labeled products are safer for human health and the environment, but did you know that they clean just as well as traditional products? Safer Choice labeled products meet the Safer Choice Standard for performance and ingredient safety, so you won't be sacrificing quality for peace of mind. There are many types of products that carry the Safer Choice label, so there are tons of opportunities to swap! To search all of the products that meet the Safer Choice Standard, and find where to purchase them, visit https://www.epa.gov/saferchoice/products.

By making the switch to a Safer Choice labeled product, your school is making a commitment to a healthier environment, inside and out, for your students. If your school chooses to participate in this challenge, please let our Safer Choice program coordinator Whitney Lehrer know, so she can recognize your efforts!

She is also available to answer any questions you may have.

As you tackle your spring-cleaning list, make sure to look for the Safer Choice label on your products!

Contact: Whitney Lehrer, 214-665-6553 or lehrer.whitney@epa.gov

CONSIDER THE TOMATO...

31% of fresh tomatoes bought by U.S. households are thrown out—that's 21 tomatoes a year per person! Throwing out that many tomatoes costs us a bundle— over $2.3 billion a year. If only it was just tomatoes... the cost of all U.S. household food waste = $166 BILLION!

By making small shifts in how we shop, store, and prepare food, we can keep the valuable resources used to produce and distribute food from going to waste. https://www.epa.gov/sustainable-management-food/joining-food-recovery-challenge-and-awards-process

April 2021 is Food Waste Recovery Challenge Month

May 2-8 is Drinking Water Week

In 1988, American Water Works Association brought Drinking Water Week to the attention of our government and formed a coalition along with the League of Women Voters, the Association of State Drinking Water Administrators and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Rep. Robert Roe and Sen. Dennis DeConcini subsequently sponsored a resolution to name the first week of May as Drinking Water Week, and the week-long observance was declared in a joint congressional resolution signed by then President Ronald Reagan. So, for more than 40 years the American Water Works Association and its members have used Drinking Water Week as a unique opportunity for both water professionals and the communities they serve to recognize the vital role water plays in our daily lives.

Here are some links to help students in different grades understand where our drinking water comes from.

For K-3 Students

Thirstin's water cycle adventure

Thirstin's water cycle

Thirstin's wacky water adventure

For 4-8 Students

Matching water terms

Non-point source pollution

Water purification by evaporation and condensation

The role of plants in water filtration

All information can be found at https://www.epa.gov/ground-water-and-drinking-water/drinking-water-activities-students-and-teachers

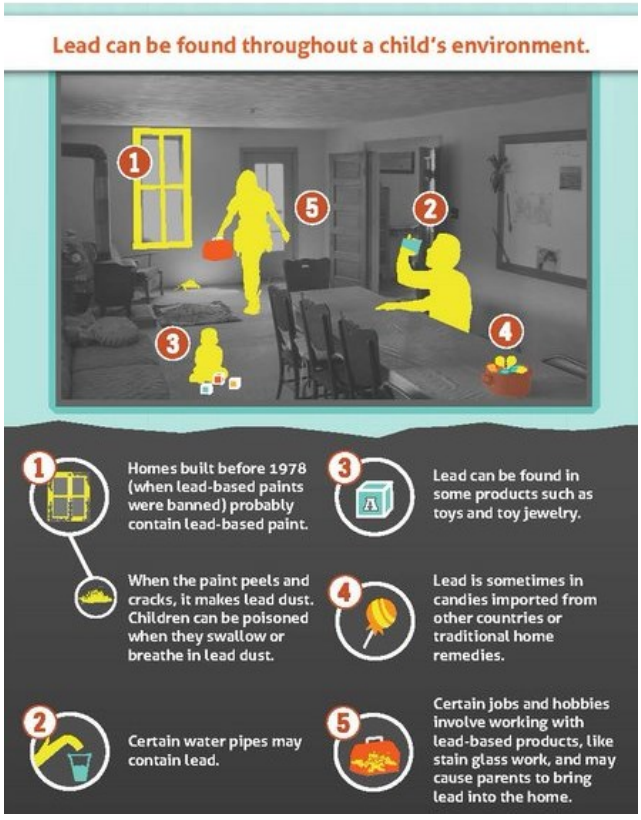
For 9-12 Students

Build your own watershed (PDF)(2 pp, 28K, About PDF)

Question & answer game

Notes from the Southwest Center for Pediatric Health in El Paso, Texas

Lead exposure in children is still a big problem in the United States. Indoor lead hazard sources are the most dangerous for children. Sadly, the risk of child lead exposure is ongoing and there are many possible ongoing sources of environmental lead. Check the school for peeling paint, especially on surfaces close to where children eat, play, and walk. Check the lower parts of school walls, corners, windowsills, window frames, and door frames. Check the outside walls too, especially those that are near playground areas and student pickup areas. Even when the topcoat of paint is lead-free, when paint peels, the peeling can expose underlying surfaces of lead-based paint. And did you know, paint chips taste sweet. When a child eats one paint chip, they often go back for more. As lead-contaminated paint deteriorates, children can breathe in the particles. If you find peeling paint in your school, report it to your school administrator.



Lead in indoor dust is one of the most dangerous sources of child lead exposure. Lead gets into indoor dust in many ways. Lead from truck exhaust fumes and air pollution collects in dust. Lead from deteriorating lead paint ends up in dust. Lead contaminated objects can also “shed” lead into indoor dust. That lead-contaminated dust ends up on children’s hands, and those hands usually end up in children’s mouths. So, get rid of that dust! It’s not that hard to do. Wet wiping and wet mopping is very effective. Every week be sure to wet wipe and wet mop all those areas where dust collects, surfaces, floors, corners, window sills, bookshelves, and books. It’s a simple way to help keep our children healthy, safe, and lead-free!

U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
OFFICE OF PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT
WWW.EPA.GOV

The Environmental Protection Agency extends nominations deadline for the 2021 President's Environmental Student and Teacher Awards

WASHINGTON (February 19, 2021) — Today, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced that it's extending the nominations deadline for their Environmental Education Presidential awards program. EPAs Office of Environmental Education will now accept applications for the 2021 President's Environmental Youth Awards (PEYA) and Presidential Innovation Awards for Environmental Educators (PIAEE) through April 30, 2021.

"Investing in our nation's students and teachers by creating opportunities to engage in real world issues will help build the next generation of environmental leaders," said Rosemary Enobakhare, Associate Administrator, Office of Public Engagement and Environmental Education**. "**Providing an extension will allow additional time for all students and teachers to submit applications for this invaluable awards program."

Since the establishment of the original Environmental Education Act of 1970, The President's Environmental Youth Award (PEYA) Program has recognized outstanding community-level environmental projects by K-12 youth for over 50 years. Today, as part of the National Environmental Education Act of 1990, PEYA continues to promote awareness of natural resources and encourages positive community involvement.

PIAEE recognizes outstanding K-12 grade educators who integrate environmental, place-based experiential learning into their classrooms.

Additional Information on the Awards

EPA is seeking PEYA and PIAEE award applications for projects on a variety of environmental topics, including (but not limited to), projects on:

- Climate Change
- Making a visible difference in Environmental Justice communities
- Reducing food waste and loss and excess food recovery efforts
- Reducing contributions to ocean and marine litter
- Solutions in recycling
- Using science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) to teach environmental education
- Environmental sustainability
- Sustainable agricultural practices
- Healthy school environments

The President's Environmental Youth Awards (PEYA) recognizes outstanding environmental stewardship projects from grades K-12 by promoting environmental awareness and encouraging community involvement. EPA will select up to two winners in each of EPA's 10 Regions – one regional winner for grades K-5, and one regional winner for grades 6-12. The winning projects will be highlighted on EPA's website. All student projects must be sponsored by at least one adult over the age of 21. And, if the sponsor is not a teacher, the project must have a teacher as a co-sponsor. The application and eligibility information are available on EPA's PEYA page.

The Presidential Innovation Award for Environmental Educators (PIAEE) recognizes outstanding K-12 teachers who employ innovative approaches to environmental education. Up to two teachers from each of EPA's 10 regions, from different states, will be selected to receive this award. Teachers will receive a Presidential plaque and an award of up to $2,500 cash to be used to further professional development in environmental education. Winning teachers' local education agencies will also receive awards of up to $2,500 cash to fund environmental educational activities and programs. Next years' winners will be highlighted on EPA's website.

U.S. FOOD & DRUG ADMINISTRATION

FOOD SAFETY • NUTRITION • COSMETICS

NEWS for EDUCATORS

January 2021

Welcome to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition's (CFSAN) **News for Educators!** Check out our latest information and materials for educating your consumer groups. We also encourage you to share this update and invite your colleagues to sign up for future issues!

Food Safety

Food Waste

At the start of each new year, many people make food-related resolutions like eating healthier or dropping a few pounds. This year, consider helping your audiences make a different kind of food resolution that will encourage them to waste less of the food they purchase, stretch their food dollars, and help protect the environment. By some estimates, a typical family of four will waste as much as $1,500 of their food dollars each year. Wasted food is also the single largest category of waste going into the typical municipal landfill, which contributes to excess methane production. Share these new videos from FDA with your audiences to help them learn how to take action to reduce food waste:

- Tips for Reducing Food Waste
- Understanding Date Labels on Food Packages
- Imperfect Produce

Food Waste Facts

Nutrition

Committing to a healthier lifestyle often begins with making healthier food choices. One way for people to make decisions that have a lasting impact on their health is by using the Nutrition Facts label on packaged foods and beverages. Use the following FDA resources to teach your audiences about the Nutrition Facts label and how to use it to make more informed food choices.

- The "What's New" page highlights the changes to the Nutrition Facts label.
- These fact sheets and videos make it easy to learn about the Nutrition Facts label, including serving size, added sugars, and calories.
- The Interactive Nutrition Facts Label allows you to explore the updated label online in greater detail.

EPA Region 6—South Central

1201 Elm Street
Suite 500
Dallas, Texas 75270

EPA Region 6 Children's Health Team

Congratulations to Paula Selzer, EPA Region 6 Children's Health Coordinator on her retirement from the EPA!

Cathy Gilmore, SEE for Healthy Schools Newsletter
Gilmore.cathy@epa.gov
214 665-6574

Protecting human health and the environment.

The EPA has many opportunities to increase the safety and sustainability of your school. Please contact us to schedule a live webinar on any of the subjects below:

Sustainable Management of Food: It's important now more than ever for all of us to not waste food. Learn how our food choices impact the environment and how we can reduce food waste and save money. Stephen Sturdivant, Sturdivant.stephen@epa.gov, 214 665-6673

Recycling: Recycling, along with reduction and reuse, is a great way for your students to participate in your sustainability goals. By providing increased access to recycling receptacles and awareness of recycling best practices, you can reduce your waste and your carbon footprint. Deanna Debose, debose.deanna@epa.gov, 214 665-6461

Safer Choice: Developed to give consumers an easy way to choose products with safer chemical ingredients, the Safer Choice label indicates that a chemical product has met the EPA's rigorous standards for safety, which means the products are better both for the environment and human health. Whitney Lehrer, lehrer.whitney@epa.gov, 214 665-6553

Lead Based Paint: The Renovation, Repair, and & Painting (RRP) Rule helps protect children from exposure to lead based paint dust caused by renovation and repairs conducted in a building built prior to 1978. Our lead-based paint program is here to help answer questions and to provide guidance on the regulation and removal. Mikeal Adams, adams.mikeal@epa.gov, 214 665-6711

Integrated Pest Management: The Region 6 Contact for the Integrated Pest Management Program under Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act (FIFRA) is Ken McPherson, mcpherson.kenneth @epa.gov, 214 665-6754

Pollution Prevention and Source Reduction Assistance Grant Programs: Provide financial assistance to States, Universities/Colleges and Tribes on Source Reduction and P2 Best Management Practices through technical assistance training and workshops. Annette Smith, smith.annette@epa.gov, 214 665-2127.

ODDS AND ENDS

In our next issue, the Region 6 Healthy Schools Newsletter in June 2021 will highlight the following

- Home Safety Month
- Smart Irrigation Month
- WaterSense Challenge Month

Other topics will include National Oceans Week, Sunwise and Extreme Heat Week, and Research for a Healthy Environment Month, in addition to the quarterly columns on Notes for Nurses, Custodian's Closet, and Learning Links. 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 to be added or removed from the distribution list, please contact Cathy Gilmore, Senior Environmental Employee (SEE) for Healthy Schools at Gilmore.cathy@epa.gov

We would love your Feedback on this newsletter or suggestions for future topics. Please email EPA at Gilmore.cathy@epa.gov.