

MnSTA Position Statement on Science Laboratory Safety

Approved January 30, 2016, by the MnSTA Board of Directors

A survey of Minnesota Science Teachers Association (MnSTA) members in 2014 identified science laboratory and classroom safety as a top priority of concern. MnSTA has reviewed and now adopts the NSTA Position Statements on Laboratory/Classroom Safety as the **MnSTA Position Statement on Science Safety**.

Several accidents in Minnesota classrooms have elevated the concern about safe facilities for science laboratories, the use and disposal of chemicals, safe instructional practices, and student overcrowding in laboratories.

National Science Teachers Association (NSTA) Position Statements are well researched and vetted, including reviews from the legal profession. From a legal point of view, position statements from professional organizations are considered standards of conduct (duty of care) for the profession.

MnSTA endorses the following NSTA position statements on science laboratory safety in schools:

- [Learning Conditions for High School Science](#)
- [The Integral Role of Laboratory Investigations in Science Instruction](#)
- [Liability of Science Educators for Laboratory Safety](#) (primary document)
- [Safety and School Science Instruction](#)

Furthermore MnSTA strongly recommends that schools annually complete the [Minnesota Fire Marshall Checklist for Science Laboratories](#). This document includes statutes and building codes relevant to K-12 science classrooms. The checklist must be on file at the school to be accessible for fire inspections.

Schools should consider the impact of class size on safety risks. The NSTA statement on [Liability of Science Educators for Laboratory Safety](#) cites research on the increase in accident rates when class sizes exceed 24.

References

An Alcohol Accident in Minnesota <http://www.mprnews.org/story/2011/12/11/class-lab-safety>

NSTA position papers are at <http://www.nsta.org/about/positions/>

The Minnesota Fire Marshall Checklist is at <https://dps.mn.gov/divisions/sfm/programs-services/Documents/School%20Inspections/2007sciencesafetychecklistschools.pdf> or this shortened link <http://bit.ly/MNScienceChecklist>

NSTA has a collection of safety resources and links at <http://www.nsta.org/safety/>

A set of safety resources for Minnesota schools is at the Minnesota STEM Teacher Center: <http://www.scimathmn.org/stemtc/resources/science-best-practices/science-safety>

Article: [*Science Teachers: Education Quality Plummets as Class Sizes Rise*](#)