

MEMORANDUM NO. 020-2003-04

December 17, 2003

TO: All Superintendents

RE: Wired Glass in Educational Facilities

For some time, there has been concern about the potential for injury created by polished wire glass in educational facilities. As many of you know, there was considerable discussion of the issue during the recent legislative session. While a bill was not passed, conversations I had with Senator Walker and others led me to ask staff to research the issue. I would like to share the results of that research with you.

Wire glass has been used extensively over the years because it was granted an exemption from impact standards when used in fire related assemblies (such as doors). This was because there were no glass products that met both impact and fire standards. We learned that neither Oregon OSHA nor the Building Codes Division of the Department of Consumer and Business Services has listed wire glass in existing structures as a violation of standards or code. We also learned that there are in fact, documented instances of students being injured as a result of collisions with wire glass both here in Oregon and around the country.

Not coincidentally, the Building Codes Division has recently adopted new codes that require all glass in areas subject to human impact to meet recognized impact standards. The new code applies only to new construction and replacements of wire glass windows in educational facilities and athletic facilities. I have attached a synopsis of the adopted code changes as well as a news release from the state Building Codes Division.

You also need to be aware that the new codes are being challenged in court and may, therefore be subject to change.

This is a complex and emotionally charged issue. I strongly recommend that you familiarize yourselves with the issues around wire glass and if you are considering new construction or alterations to current structures, you should consult with your local building code official and other appropriate professionals.

If you have questions, please contact Gene Evans at (503) 378-3600, ext. 2237 or e-mail gene.evans@state.or.us.

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