

# Office of Facilities Planning, New York State Education Department

## July 28, 2020 (Rev.)

### Light Transmitting Plastic Sneeze Guards or Separators

**Attention: NYSED has revised flammability standards for plastic glazing used to construct sneeze guards or separators.**

In Response to COVID 19, School Districts are anticipating reopening and are beginning to install clear plastic sneeze guards at locations where school operations and activities require staff and students to make face to face contact with each other. Locations may include, security/reception desks, counters/windows, main office reception counters, server lines, cashier stations, library checkout counters, teacher desks, and student work- stations, etc. NYSED acknowledges the protections achieved by plastic sneeze guards however they must be constructed using an approved flame-resistant material.

Plexiglass is a well-known trade name for an acrylic plastic glazing product. Typically, when a consumer needs plastic glazing, they will order the product using the term "Plexiglass" because of its identification with clear plastic glazing. Plexiglass is known to be combustible and to limit the combustibility of plastics NYSED posted Plastic Sneeze Guard Guidance dated May 29, 2020 on our website. The guidance established a standard that was too restrictive and inconsistent with provisions of the code.

The May 29 Guidance required that sneeze guards meet the NYSED Manual of Planning Standards (MPS) Sections S205-2 & S205-3 for plastic "incorporated into construction". However, typical sneeze guards are not incorporated into the building construction. They are relatively small, often detached accessories (resting on desks and counters) or furnishings (temporarily attached to ceilings or countertops) and need not comply with S205-2 & S205-3. Sneeze guards are clear plastics and must comply with the 2020 Building Code of New York State, Section 2606, Light Transmitting Plastics. To ensure an appropriate level of flammability we are now requiring that all plastic sneeze guards meet Building Code Section 2606 Light Transmitting Plastics, Sub-Section 2606.4, Specifications. There are polycarbonate and plexiglass materials that pass the tests listed in 2606.4. However, not all light transmitting plastics comply with 2606.4. **Districts must be sure the specific plastic product they are considering has documentation to show it has been tested to meet all the applicable fire test requirements listed in 2606.4.**

Although typical sneeze guards are small furnishings as noted in the paragraph above there is the possibility of light transmitting plastic incorporated into relatively large types of guards that would be considered partitions. Note that compliance with the MPS Section S205-2 and Building Code Section 2606.8, Partitions, is required for applications of plastic incorporated into building construction as partitions. Section 2606.8 requires compliance with Building Code Chapter 6, Types of Construction, and Chapter 8, Interior Finishes. These Codes and regulations include restrictive provisions depending on the application. A design professional must ensure compliance.

Reminder: The placement of plastic separators or guards must not obstruct the means of egress, block access to fire extinguishers or impede the performance of fire protection devices including but not limited to smoke detectors, sprinkler heads, CO detectors or manual pull stations.

School Districts must comply with the NYSED and Building Code requirements discussed above when installing plastic glazing for sneeze guards in school buildings. The products must be installed in accordance with code and a design professional should be consulted to ensure the product and installation is code compliant. In accordance with the Commissioner's Regulation Part 155, Section 155.2 plans and specifications for all construction projects which exceed \$10,000 or involve health and safety must be submitted to NYSED for a building permit. Installations under \$10,000 – provide NYSED Office of Facilities Planning a letter from a design professional certifying the light transmitting plastic separator complies with the applicable sections of the 2020 Building Code of NYS & the MPS.