

Testimony for SB42

Limited Liability for architects and engineers in certain circumstances

Presented by Dr. Bob Hull, Director of the Kansas Center for Safe and Prepared Schools

The Kansas Center for Safe and Prepared Schools (KC-SPS) is a collaborative organization that is attached to the Kansas Division of Emergency Management and reports to Major General Lee Tafanelli, Kansas' TAG. The mission of KC-SPS is to provide leadership, training and resources to Kansas Schools that sustains and improves their safe and prepared learning environment. Furthermore, KC-SPS assists schools in the prevention of, preparation for, response to and recovery from crisis incidents that impact schools and their local communities. KC-SPS believes that all educational settings are vulnerable to threats, hazards and disasters.

In our guiding principles, we state that all schools have a duty of care to provide a safe and prepared learning environment regardless of present challenges. As possible, we emphasize no or low cost items that improve school safety and preparedness. We believe that school safety and preparedness is more than just a school issue and that it takes the collaborative expertise of many professions and disciplines. We also believe that a school crisis is a community crisis and a community crisis is a school crisis. Since all disasters are local we advocate for local school and community resources to work and prepare together in advance for emergency situations.

We travel all around Kansas working with school districts, first responders and emergency management. A common question we've received from our clientele is, *"Where is the best place to shelter students and staff during a severe weather incident"*? This is in light of the data from the Joplin, Greensburg, Chapman and other tornados that have impacted schools. To better understand the destructive impact on school buildings, I would suggest you view the YouTube videos captured from the security cameras in the Joplin School District.

School personnel are not subject matter experts on where to place people in a school building to provide maximum protection against a severe storm. In the past, architects and structural engineers have been hesitant to provide voluntary information to school personnel due to potential negative impact on their professional license. If passed, this bill would be a companion to 60-4201 which already provides limited liability for architects and engineers.

Several Kansas School Districts have a FEMA approved storm shelter they use to shelter their students, staff and nearby community members in a severe storm. However, many other schools do not have these shelters. In the absence of these shelters, all schools are genuinely interested in knowing the best possible places to provide shelter.

On any typical day in Kansas, 20 to 25% of our population is in some type of educational setting. Usually, schools are also the largest gathering point in a local community. We believe this illustrates how school safety and preparedness is more than just a school issue.

We urge you to positively endorse this proposed bill on limited liability. We believe this action will allow professionals with this expertise to more freely advise schools on how to best shelter students, staff and community members during times of severe weather. Thank you. We will answer questions that committee members may have about our support of this bill.

Dr. Bob Hull, Director
Kansas Center for Safe and Prepared Schools