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School safety training begins

August 25, 2011

By MICHAEL ERB (merb@newsandsentinel.com), Parkersburg News and Sentinel

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PARKERSBURG - Wood County Schools is using an online service to facilitate safety training for employees.

The service called SafeSchools allows employees to complete safety training in a variety of areas through an online program which provides information and gives a series of questions to show the employee understands the material.

Training ranges from general safety issues such as falling hazards in the workplace to specific policies.

The program does not certify employees in safety areas such as use of an AED or operate heavy machinery, said Jeff Payne, director of purchasing and safety for Wood County Schools, but makes them aware of policies and procedures governing those areas.

"Right now we are doing required training and required policies," he said.

Those items are reviewed through 15 training lessons, just under three hours total worth of training, Payne said. Those sessions cover specific policies for Wood County Schools, such as the district's drug-free workplace policy and conflict management.

Administrators will have the option of adding training sessions on topics specific to their buildings or departments.

Superintendent Pat Law said one benefit to the program is its flexibility. In years past the district had to set aside time to review the policies with all employees, usually during a day of training.

Now the employees can review the policies and complete the training during work hours or from home. Each section includes a due date and an estimated time to complete, often 5-20 minutes for any specific section.

"It really has been a time saver for us," Law said.

Another benefit of the program is its ability to track and report on employee progress. Administrators are able to see which employees have completed which parts of the training, how they performed and how long the training took.

"Each principal or administrator can monitor their staff's progress," Payne said.

Sue Woodward, assistant superintendent of school services, said some departments have been able to schedule time in district computer labs to have all employees complete the training at once.

"That solved the question of what if the employee doesn't have computer access at home," she said.

Payne said the SafeSchools service cost the school system about \$10,000.

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