



# ASCIP *RISK ALERT!*

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**Date:** May 26, 1998

**Attention:** ASCIP Members

**Subject:** LASER POINTER HAZARDS

ASCIP has become aware of the use of certain small hand-held laser pointer devices by pupils on campus for *other than* academic activities. Such devices come in a variety of sizes and shapes and are intended to be used to highlight portions of projected presentations in a highly visible manner, allowing the presenter freedom of movement away from the projection screen.

Unfortunately, some students have begun to use these devices to play "laser tag" games on campus and, in several reported cases, to harass other pupils or school staff. One manufacturer of laser pointers has produced a model in the form of a Star Trek® Phaser weapon which has added to the problem. Upon being alerted to this activity, ASCIP staff reviewed the potential health hazards associated with the indiscriminate use of such laser pointer devices.

While generally harmless when used as intended for enhancing business and academic presentations, **these devices are true lasers with beams produced by a light-emitting diode and can damage vision if the beam is pointed directly into the eye. Each pointer device is required to carry a warning label advising the user of the potential for eye injury.** ASCIP has received reports from two member Districts in the last 30 days advising of eye injuries resulting from laser beams striking a pupil or school staff person in the eye.

According to the California Penal Code, directing a laser beam to a person's eyes with the intent to harm may be considered a crime. Additionally, a random laser beam projected into the eyes of a motor vehicle or equipment operator during "laser tag" activity or other uncontrolled use could result in an accident beyond the immediate school grounds.

**While considered to be a low powered class 1 or class 2 laser device, direct eye exposure may result in permanent blindness due to irreparable destruction of critical eye tissue.** Therefore, ASCIP recommends that each educational agency review these concerns within their own organization, adopt a policy regarding the possession and use of laser pointer devices on campus, and if necessary, institute appropriate actions to address these issues as they arise.

*Reviewed July, 2006*