

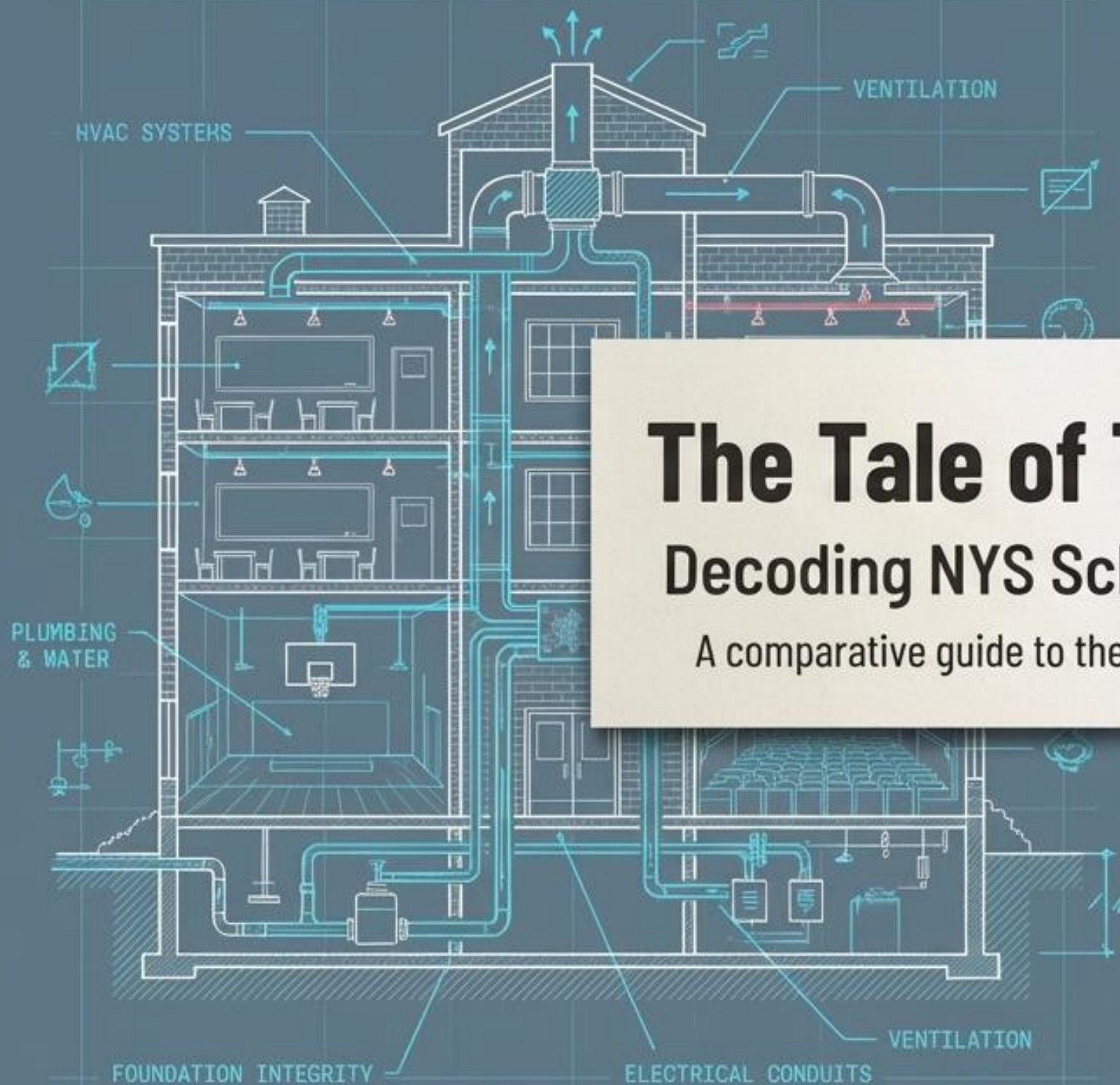
Health & Safety Committees

May 2026 Webinar

New York School Environmental Health Program (SEHP)

OHM BOCES - Patty Cerio – Supervisor of Safety Services





The Tale of Two Playbooks

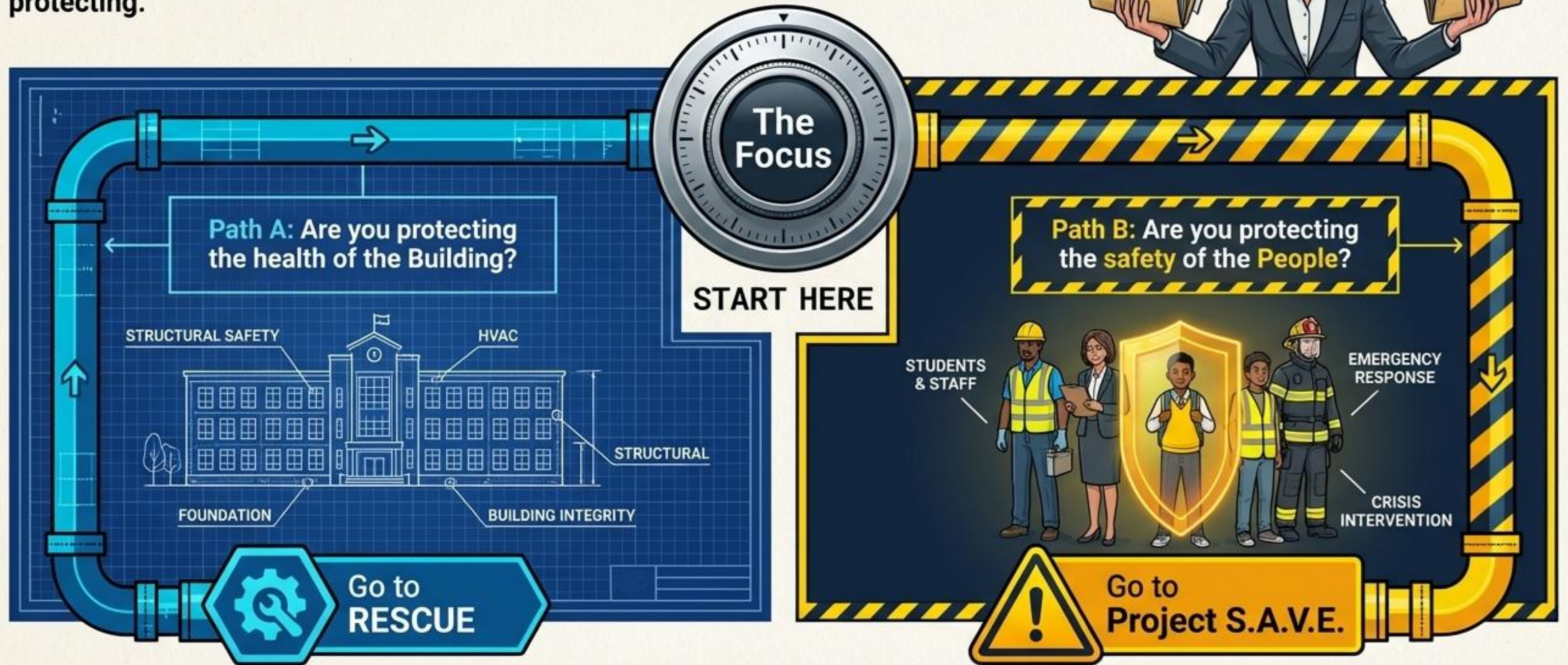
Decoding NYS School Safety Mandates

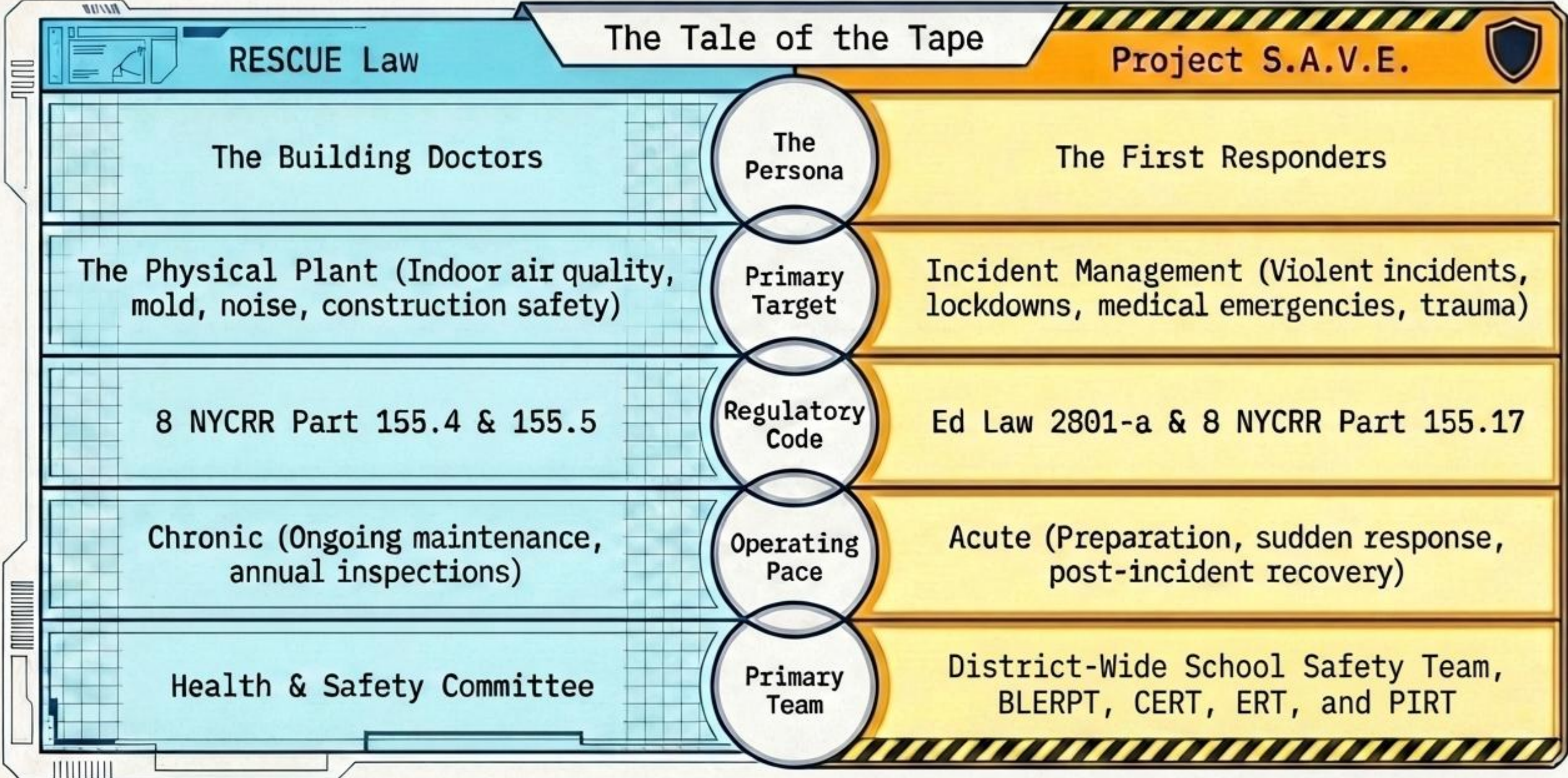
A comparative guide to the RESCUE Law and Project S.A.V.E.



Untangling the Safety Mandate Overlap

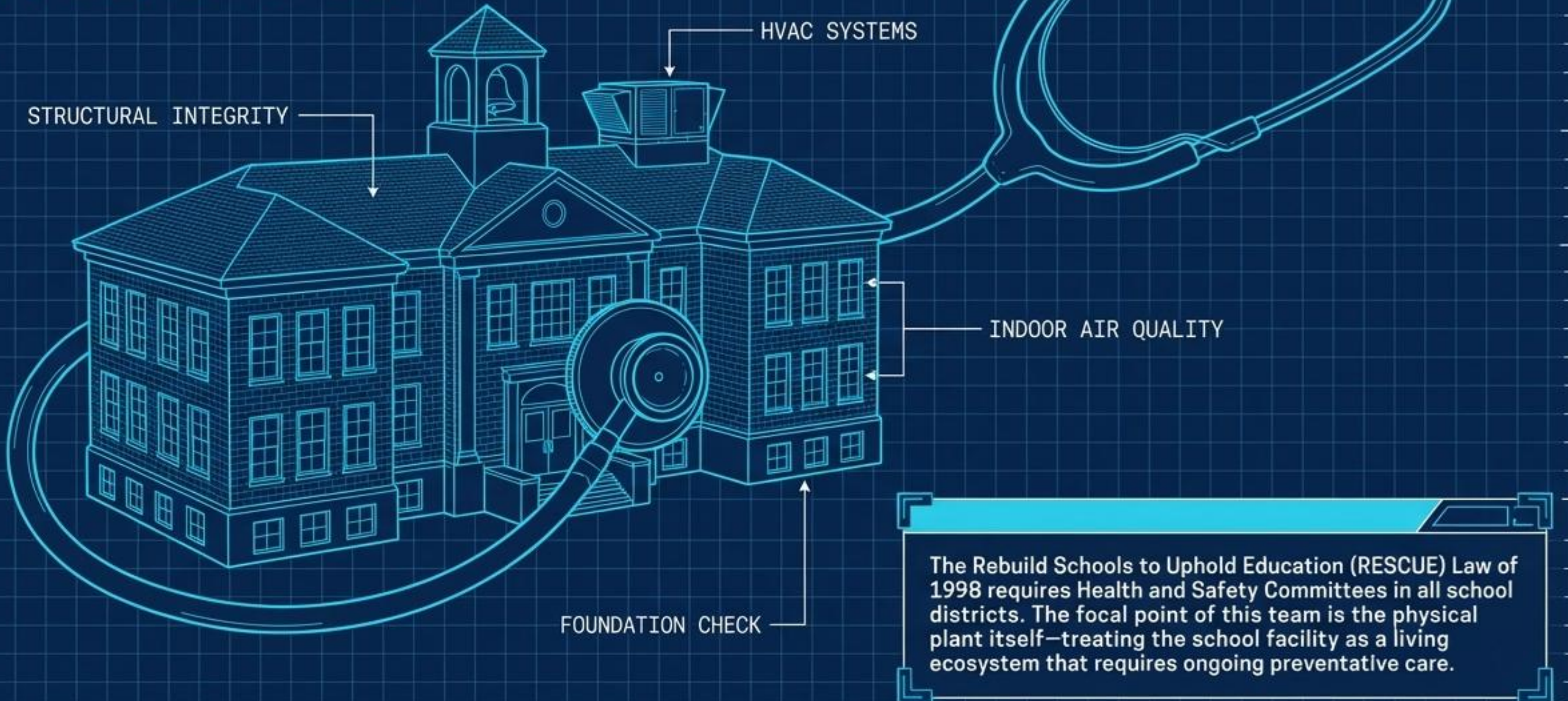
New York State mandates multiple distinct teams to keep public schools safe. For administrators, union reps, and parent volunteers, it is notoriously easy to get them mixed up. **The key to clarity is knowing exactly what you are protecting.**





Playbook 1: The RESCUE Law

Mandating the Health and Safety (H&S) Committee



Anatomy of a H&S Committee

Recruitment should be publicly solicited via canvas letters to assure public confidence and independence from administrative control.



Leadership: Recommended Two Co-Chairs
(allows easier access to chain of command & eases workload).

The Minimum



District Officials



Staff



Bargaining Units



Parents

Expanded Roster (NYSUT Recommendations)



School
Physician/MD



Nurse



Custodian



Buildings &
Grounds Admin



BOCES H&S



Teachers



PTA



Students

GADENCE

The Cadence:
Should meet 4 times per year minimum. Must meet more frequently during construction, with an expanded member list including contractors.

Managing the Information Highway

The committee must be integrated into the district's administrative nervous system. They require access to critical operational data to function.



The Complaint Procedure Mandate

Section 155.4 strictly dictates how complaints are handled. The district must provide a written response to all written complaints detailing:

1. Investigations, inspections, or tests made.
2. Results of those tests.
3. Actions taken to solve the problem.
4. Actions taken if a law or contract violation occurred.

The H&S Committee Mandate Checklist

- **Mandated Regulatory Functions (NYSED 2017)**
 - Participate in the annual visual inspection (if applicable).
 - Investigate and respond to written complaints.
 - Review district health and safety plans and policies.
 - Consult on construction and renovation projects.
- **Suggested Proactive Duties**
 - Conduct regular, non-mandated safety walk-throughs.
 - Develop and distribute health and safety communication materials.
 - Analyze accident and injury reports for trends.
 - Create and publish clear IAQ investigation procedures.
 - Establish subject matter experts within the committee.



Key Takeaway: The committee's role extends beyond mere compliance. Moving from reactive complaint response to proactive planning and communication is essential for a safer school environment.

Evolving from Reactive to Proactive

Evolution Map

Current State: Reactive Focus



- Operating entirely on "Complaint Response."
- Waiting for an issue to arise before acting.
- Conducting ad-hoc Indoor Air Quality (IAQ) investigations only after symptoms appear.

Future Goal: Proactive Focus



- Establishing committee members as Subject Matter Experts (SNEs).
- Create and communicate various health and safety plans and measures to school staff and community.
- Publishing clear, transparent IAQ Investigation Procedures before crises occur.

Playbook 2: Project S.A.V.E.

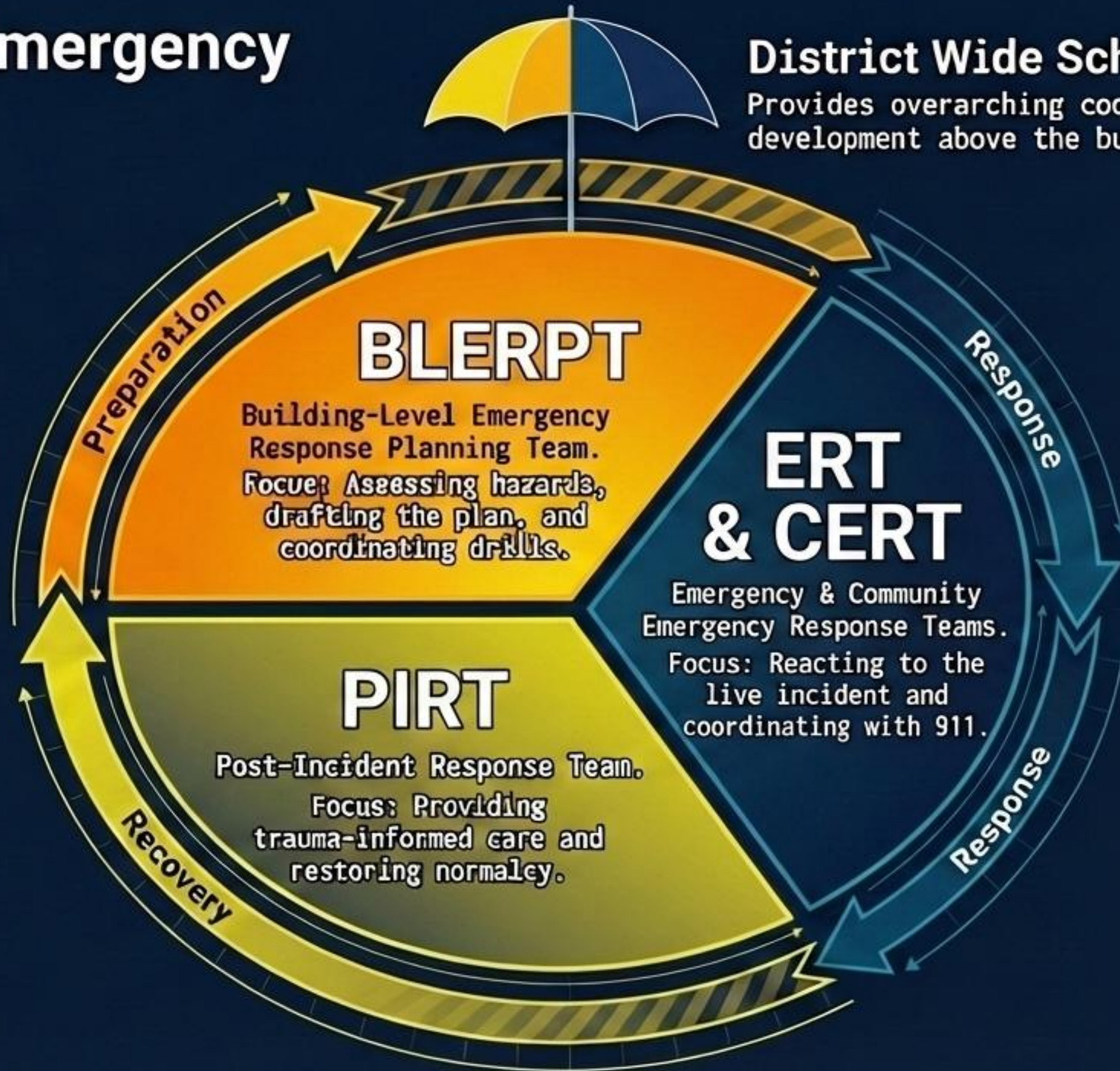
Managing the Lifecycle of an Emergency



Enacted in 2000 and updated in 2024, Ed Law 2801-a and Commissioner's Regulation 155.17 govern the human element of school safety. S.A.V.E. mandates distinct teams to handle the acute phases of violent incidents and emergencies.

The S.A.V.E. Emergency Lifecycle

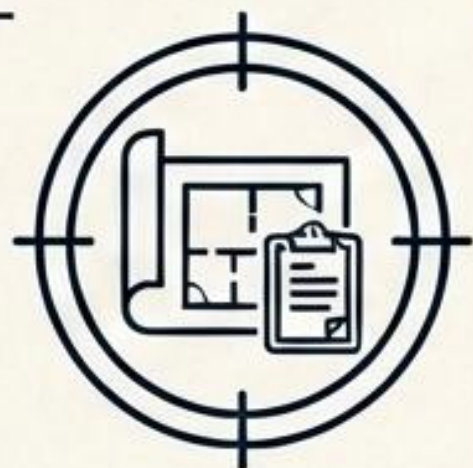
District Wide School Safety Team
Provides overarching coordination and plan development above the building level.



District-Wide School Safety Committee/Team

- ✓ **Legal Basis:** Mandated by Education Law § 2801-a(4) and 8 NYCRR § 155.17.
- ✓ **Purpose:** Develops the District-Wide School Safety Plan for violence prevention & emergency response.
- ✓ **Membership:** Includes School Board, Teacher/Admin/Parent orgs, and School Safety Personnel.
- ✓ **Responsibilities:** Annual plan review, public engagement, and ensuring compliance with specific protocols.

Meet the Incident Response Teams



BLERPT (The Planners)

Membership: Principal, teachers, administrators, parents, school safety personnel, local law enforcement, fire officials.

Key Task: Annual revision of the BLERP; coordinating drills and exercises.



ERT & CERT (The Action Squad)

Membership: Staff present daily (inclusive of before, during, and after school), emergency response reps.

Key Task: Executing emergency response protocols and directing first responders.



PIRT (The Healers)

Membership: School psychologists, social workers, nurses, counselors.

Key Task: Grief counseling, long-term community support, and trauma-informed recovery.

Highly Recommended Addition: The Threat Assessment Team

Other Teams/Committees*

Workplace Violence Committee

Technology Committee

Health & Wellness Committee

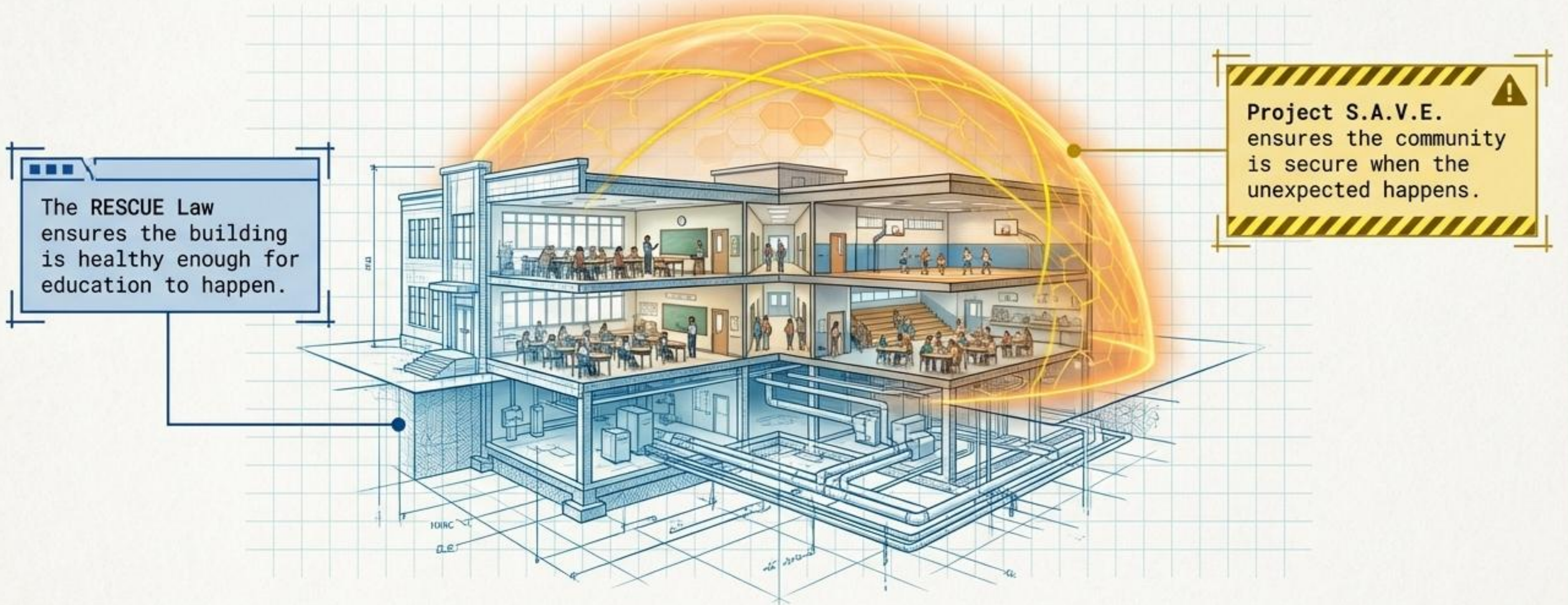
Reunification Team

Threat Assessment Team

*Not an all inclusive list

THE UNIFIED SCHOOL SAFETY ECOSYSTEM

These mandates are not duplicates; they are two halves of a complete safety ecosystem.



Together, proactive facility management and acute emergency readiness protect the entire district.

Questions?

THANK YOU!

Patty Cerio

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