

August 17, 2017

TO THE ADMINISTRATOR ADDRESSED:

SUBJECT: Solar Eclipse Safety Precautions

On Monday, Aug. 21, our state will experience a partial solar eclipse. Given the infrequency of such an event, it is understandable that many Texas educators may elect to use this day as a learning opportunity for students. While such outside-the-classroom experiences enhance learning for students at all grade levels, I want to encourage our educators to take the proper safety precautions.

According to NASA, the only safe way to look directly at the uneclipsed or partially eclipsed sun is through special-purpose solar filters, such as “eclipse glasses” or hand-held solar viewers. Homemade filters or ordinary sunglasses (even very dark ones) are not safe for looking at the sun.

To view the crescent sun at any point during the partial eclipse in Texas, teachers should ensure their students:

- Look at it directly through special goggles;
- Look at it indirectly with a home-made pinhole projector; or
- Look at it indirectly by taking binoculars or a telescope, and orienting them so they project the shadow onto the ground.

Special goggles for eclipse viewing may be found – for a cost of around \$2 each – at some local home improvement stores. Note that these are not like sunglasses. You cannot see anything except the sun when you’re wearing them. Do not look at the sun without valid goggles. While you may not feel anything, you take a risk in burning your retina, which can cause permanent vision loss.

While this solar event is one many teachers and students will want to experience, I urge safety above all else. To learn more about proper safety precautions and safe ways to experience or view this eclipse, please visit the NASA website at <https://eclipse2017.nasa.gov/safety>.

Sincerely,

Mike Morath
Commissioner