



Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ): Rainier Beach High School Safety

1. Is the new Rainier Beach High School safe?

Yes. The school is safe. Recent testing found **no methane inside the building**. Safety systems were built into the school foundation system to prevent methane from entering the building.

2. What is methane?

Methane is a gas that can form naturally in soil that contains peat.

3. How can methane pose a risk?

Methane can form a risk only if it builds up in a confined space and comes into contact with a spark or flame. When methane is properly vented and not allowed to build up, it is not an explosion risk.

Recent tests showed no methane within the school building. As a precaution, SPS built in protective measures below the foundation to ensure long-term safety. Testing will continue to monitor for any methane in the buildings.

4. Why are people talking about methane at the school?

Some areas under the school have peat in the soil, which can produce methane. This is common in parts of Seattle. Because of this, SPS planned safety measures and testing.

5. Were safety steps skipped when the school was built?

No. **All safety measures identified were included during construction.** However, a recommended methane test before the school opened was missed. That was a mistake. SPS has started testing, and testing conducted December 2025 detected no methane within the building

6. What safety features are built into the school?

The school has:

- A **methane venting system** under the building that safely sends gas above the roof
- A **thick waterproof barrier** under the foundation that blocks methane and moisture

These features help keep methane out of the building.

7. Has the school been tested for methane?

Yes.

- Testing on **December 9, 2025**, showed **no methane** inside the school.
- The testing equipment checks for methane and other explosive gases.

8. Will methane testing continue?

Yes. SPS will:

- Continue testing for methane
- Hire an outside expert to do regular testing
- Share test results with the community

9. Who checked the safety work?

- **Maul Foster & Alongi (MFA)**, an environmental engineering firm, studied the site and reviewed the safety systems
- **Building Envelope Technology Research (BET&R)**, a building envelope consulting firm, checked the waterproof barrier to make sure it was sealed correctly

10. What about the soil settling issue?

During construction, one area of soil settled more than expected when the building's weight was added.

- The issue was fixed
- There has been **no further settling** since the repair

11. What is SPS doing now to make sure the school stays safe?

SPS is:

- Continuing methane testing
- Hiring outside experts for extra review
- Sharing information and test results with families, staff, and the community
