

## Highlights

- Recognize & Understand IAQ Issues
- Health Complaints Associated with Poor IAQ
- Common IAQ Pollutants and Their Sources

## Inside

- Long/Short Term Health Hazards
- Irritations/Headaches/Dizziness/Asthma/Allergies
- VOC's, Formaldehyde & Microbiological Agents

# WHY INDOOR AIR QUALITY IS IMPORTANT TO SCHOOLS AND OFFICES

### *Why is it important that schools and offices recognize and understand IAQ issues?*

Failure to prevent IAQ problems or respond to IAQ complaints in schools and offices can result in: increased long and short term health effects; a negative impact on the learning environment, comfort and attendance; reduced productivity of teachers and office staff; increased potential for a school or an office to be closed and/or occupants relocated; and strained relationships among administration, parents and staff.



### *What health complaints are associated with poor IAQ?*

Common health complaints include eye and mucous membrane irritation, headaches, dizziness, asthmatic episodes, and allergic reactions. These complaints are often reported by both students and office staff. However, children are considered especially vulnerable to adverse effects because of their higher respiration rate per unit body weight and their underdeveloped ability to communicate concern.



### *What are common IAQ pollutants and their sources?*

Typical IAQ pollutants include volatile organic compounds (VOC's), formaldehyde, and microbiological agents. These contaminants may originate within the building or be drawn in from outdoors. Many products used in school activities and business operations, as well as construction materials and furnishings, contain chemicals that can become sources of indoor air pollutants. These products include cleaners, copier toner, consumer products, art supplies, and laboratory chemicals.

### *What sampling methods are available to screen for these common IAQ pollutants?*

Several screening tools are available to assist in measuring certain indoor pollutants. For example, tape slides can be used to analyze building surfaces qualitatively for mold contamination. Using this method, a variety of building surfaces, including ceiling systems, wall coverings and HVAC system duct work can be evaluated. Other screening tools

include passive monitors for airborne VOC's and formaldehyde. These monitors are simple to use and do not require sampling pumps or other equipment to operate. Using the monitors, airborne VOC and formaldehyde concentrations can be determined and compared to existing guidelines for acceptability. Results from these tests may also indicate building locations with significant pollutant sources or inadequate ventilation.

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