

CT Foundation for Environmentally Safe Schools

A nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting policies, practices and resources that protect school occupants from environmental health hazards

www.pollutionfreeschools.org

888-420-5526

How Can You Improve School Indoor Air Quality?

2009 IAQ Advocacy Checklist

1. **Observe** your surroundings and use your senses when inside the school. Take note of the following:
 - a. Are there any signs of water damage?
 - b. Are there visible signs of mold or mildew growth?
 - c. Are ceiling tiles, walls, carpets or window frames wet or stained?
 - d. Are floor tiles raised?
 - e. Do all classrooms have operable windows?
 - f. Are air vents free of obstructions?
 - g. Is the ventilation system working?
 - h. Are art, science or cleaning supplies stored in classrooms?
 - i. Does the school have unusual, musty, stale or unpleasant odors?
 - j. Do trucks, buses or cars idle near the school? Where? For how long?

2. **Inquire** as to whether your school currently uses or has used the EPA's *Indoor Air Quality Tools for Schools Program* (TfS) or has a Health and Safety (H&S) Committee that deals with IAQ issues. If the TfS program or H&S Committee is up and running find out:
 - a. When did this TfS program/ H&S Committee begin?
 - b. Who is on the TfS team or H&S Committee addressing IAQ?
 - c. If there is an IAQ/H&S coordinator for you to contact?
 - d. How often does the TfS/H&S Committee meet?
 - e. When was the last meeting?

3. **Ask** the school official in charge (IAQ/H&S Coordinator, principal or superintendent):
 - a. How are sources of indoor air pollution screened, identified and remediated?
 - b. For written documentation of how related issues such as renovations, safer cleaning products and procedures, pesticides and bus idling are being addressed.

Key CT School IAQ Law Requirements

Section one of CT Public Act 03-220: An Act Concerning Indoor Air Quality in Schools (effective July 2003) requires each local and regional board of education to adopt and implement “an indoor air quality program.”

Many school districts in CT have chosen to use the EPA’s Indoor Air Quality Tools for Schools Program to satisfy this statutory requirement. The majority of CT school districts have completed a two part, five hour training program that teaches teams of school personnel how to use this indoor air quality (IAQ) program. The training has been conducted at no charge by the CT Department of Public Health and members of the CT School Indoor Environment Resource Team. At the same time, the CT Department of Public Health does not have the authority, capacity or tracking mechanism to determine how effectively or to what degree each of these trained school districts is currently implementing its IAQ program.

For further information regarding the Tools for Schools Program and school district success stories, please call Kenny Foscoe at the CT Department of Public Health at (860) 509-7742. For a brochure go to: www.dph.state.ct.us/Publications/brs/eoha/schoolteam.pdf

Section One of PA 03-220 also stipulates that local and regional boards of education provide reports on the condition of school facilities and actions taken to implement an indoor air quality program. The 2003 law had required annual reporting. In 2006, Public Act 06-158 changed the timing of this reporting process from yearly to every other year. In 2003, 2005 and 2007 the School Facility Survey (ED050) was revised to incorporate questions dealing with school indoor air quality.

For more information on how your school’s IAQ has been rated consult the section of the CT State Department of Education website dealing with school facilities at : <http://www.csde.state.ct.us/public/dgm/ed050/pickyear.asp> or call the School Facilities Division at (860) 713- 6467.

For further information regarding the fundamental problems with this reporting process as well as suggestions on how to improve the implementation and enforcement of Section One of PA 03-220 go to : www.pollutionfreeschools.org and look for reports.

Section Two of PA 03-220 states that prior to January 1, 2008 school buildings that have been constructed, extended, renovated or replaced on or after January 1, 2003 must have a uniform inspection and evaluation. This evaluation must be made available for public inspection at a regularly scheduled board of education meeting. This inspection and evaluation must include (but is not limited to) a review of: heating, ventilation and air conditioning systems; radon in water and air; potential exposure to fungi, mold and bacteria; chemical compounds such as volatile organic compounds; degree of pest infestation; degree of pesticide usage; plans for removal of hazardous substances; plumbing; water incursion; water distribution systems (drainage systems and fixtures); structural elements (roofing, basements) and training of building staff in indoor air quality.