Newsletter: Under Construction—Check Back Soon!

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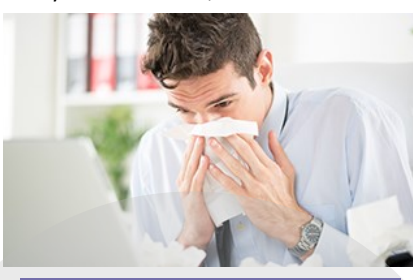
Indoor A-*achoo!*-ir Quality (IAQ): Your Questions Answered



Indoor Air Quality (IAQ) details the way that air on the inside of a building can impact a person's health, comfort, and work abilities.

What is considered a "good" IAQ?

According to OSHA, a good IAQ means a comfortable temperature and humidity level, an adequate supply of fresh outdoor air, and proper control of pollutants inside and outside a building.

Common complaints about IAQ:

- Temperature: too hot or too cold
- Air movement: too drafty or too still
- Humidity: too dry or too muggy

What are the symptoms of poor IAQ?

- Headaches
- Sinus problems
- Congestion
- Dizziness
- Nausea
- Fatigue
- Irritation of the eyes, nose or throat
- In some cases, asthma and pneumonia are linked to poor IAQ

Where do contaminants originate?

Contaminants can originate from the inside of the building, or migrate from the outside-in. Many contaminants are present in most office buildings, but in excess, or when generated at a greater rate than the building's ventilation system can remove them, they cause difficult symptoms for building occupants. Some common sources of office contaminants are as follows:

- Construction activities—indoor and outdoor contaminated air
- Inadequate AC/heating system maintenance. Contaminants are able to enter the building through outdoor air intakes. Also, if a greater amount of air is removed by the HVAC system than is supplied, the pressure in the building will be negative compared to the outdoors, which will cause unconditioned air to flow in to any gap that is present
- Cleaning chemicals
- Pesticides
- Building materials
- Copy machines and printers (yes– really!)
- Furnishings
- Fragrances and cosmetics
- Tobacco smoke
- Contaminants from home, such as pet dander and air fresheners

What are common contaminants?

- Airborne chemicals
- Bacteria
- Fungi
- Pollen
- Dust

What can be done?

- Do not block any air ventilation grills to keep air flowing!
- Do not overuse chemicals in the office
- Properly store food to avoid offensive odors
- Keep your work area dusted! A dusty surface encourages microbial growth. Swiffer dusters work great for this purpose
- Do not keep standing water on or near your workspace, and keep fabrics (i.e. carpet) dry! Moisture promotes microbial growth.
    - If microbial particles become airborne, foul odors and allergic reactions can ensue!
- We all know that secondhand smoke is dangerous, but the indoor use of electronic cigarettes brings a gamete of potential contaminants indoors, such as nicotine, flavor additives, and fragrance additives
- If you are uncomfortable or sense an unusual odor, report it immediately! Questions you can ask yourself are as follows:
    1. Do my symptoms only occur at work and cease when I am home?
    2. Do my symptoms occur at a certain time of day, during a certain season, or in a certain location at my workplace?
    3. Did my symptoms start when something happened at work, such as renovation or construction?
    4. Do other people I work with have similar complaints?
- Be aware of weather conditions or other factors (such as construction activities) when air quality issues appear
- Use chemicals only where ventilation is provided
- Limit use of fragrances, scented cosmetics, and air fresheners
- If you think a condition has arisen or is worsening because of poor IAQ, see your doctor
- You have the right to contact an OSHA office or call the toll-free number at 1-800-321-6742. If you request a workplace inspection it must be in writing
- You have the right to request a Health Hazard Evaluation from the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health. Click here to get more information

What are employer responsibilities related to IAQ?

According to OSHA:

> Employers are required to follow the General Duty Clause of the OSHAct, which requires them to provide workers with a safe workplace that does not have any known hazards that cause or are likely to cause death or serious injury. The OSHAct also requires employers to obey occupational safety and health standards created under it. Employers should be reasonably aware of the possible sources of poor air quality, and they should have the resources necessary to recognize and control workplace hazards. It is also their responsibility to inform employees of the immediate dangers that are present

Sources:

AIHA

OSHA

CDC

Newsletter Spotlight

- **Indoor Air Quality: Your Questions Answered**
- **Coping with Construction Noise**
- **Did you know? Wyoming Quick Facts**

What's that Noise? Coping with Construction Noise

What are the risks of exposure to excessive noise?

- Hearing can be permanently damaged by excessive noise
- Immediate damage can occur if a person is exposed to explosive sounds such as gunfire, explosions, or cartridge operated tools

What can I do if the noise is unbearable?

- Noise cancelling headphones may be the best option to distract from excessive construction noise
- Earplugs can be a useful, inexpensive noise cancelling option
- Try to listen to music in the background, if this works for you

Sources:

Healthy Working Lives

Prevention

Did You Know? Wyoming Quick Facts

- Herschler Building construction began in 1981, and was completed in 1983, under the direction of M.A. Mortenson Company. The cost of the project was $17.3 million at that time. In today's prices, the building would cost $94.2 million to construct
- The Herschler was constructed to allow for spectacular views of the Capitol Building
- The Herschler building was named after Governor Ed Herschler, a Democrat from Kemmerer, Wyoming. Herschler was elected in 1974, and re-elected in 1978 and 1982.

References:

Capitol Square Project

State Archives