

HOW CAN INDOOR AIR POLLUTION PROBLEMS BE SOLVED?

WHAT WE CAN PUSH THE SCHOOL DISTRICT TO DO?:

- Increase air supply. Clean and maintain the ventilation system and open and unblock all sources of fresh air.
- Eliminate sources of contamination, like carpeting. Substitute less dangerous chemicals, such as water-based paints for more toxic oil paints.
- Clean and dry damp areas where fungi can grow.
- Isolate and provide local exhaust for machines that release toxic fumes.
- Make sure hazardous work is done only on the weekends or vacations, and inform the union before it begins.
- Ensure that people who work with hazardous chemicals are protected with adequate ventilation or protective equipment, such as respirators.
- Provide information about all chemicals in use as required by the Pennsylvania Right to Know law. Compare Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDSs) to choose less hazardous products.
- Maintain temperature within the comfort zone of 65 to 75 degrees Fahrenheit, and humidity within barometric pressure of 20-40%.
- Ensure that all local exhaust systems pull polluted vapors away from people's breathing area, and that local systems do not compete with the primary ventilation system, otherwise, pollutants re-enter ventilation intakes.
- Bring in a ventilation engineer or Certified Industrial Hygienist (CIH) to verify that air movement is sufficient and to recommend remedies for any problem areas. The investigation can determine if you meet the American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE) indoor air quality standards, They recommend 20 cubic feet per minute (cfm) of fresh air per person in offices and 15 cfm in classrooms. Carry out any changes and improvements recommended by the ventilation engineer. (**See Table 1**)
- **Institute Integrated Pest Management.**
- Conduct a health survey of the members, looking for problems typical of indoor air pollution and check to see if symptoms are linked to the workplace. Your NYSUT Labor Relations Specialist can give you sample surveys.

- Investigate your building's ventilation system. Find out what type of system, if any, is used. To check the effectiveness of a ventilation system, hold tissue paper near the vents to see if they work. There should be both a supply and exhaust vent in each room. Also check for problems with local exhaust systems.
- Develop recommendations to improve air quality.
- Write contact language that will protect your rights to clean air. Your Pennsylvania Labor Relations Specialist can suggest sample language, using the ASHRAE standards as a guide.
- If you have a well-documented problem and you are not making any progress with the school district, consider calling your county Health Department. If you feel the situation is very serious, you may also want to file a request for a Health Hazard evaluation conducted by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH). According to law, employers must provide safe, healthy workplaces that are free of hazards, including indoor air pollution. (Always work with your union representative when filing a complaint. But don't stop working! Complaints to a governmental agency or NIOSH are no substitute for consistent union action.)
- Follow legislative activity – and get involved. While there is no comprehensive federal or Pennsylvania regulation on indoor air pollution for schools, legislation has been proposed and several other states have enacted indoor air pollution laws.
- Develop a safety and health committee to work to correct indoor air problems. The committee can conduct a health survey, investigate the ventilation systems, determine priorities, and push management to correct problems.

Table 1: Selected ASHRAE Ventilation Recommendations

Type of Area	Occupancy (people per 1000 sq feet)	CFM/person
Instructional Areas		
Classrooms	050	15
Laboratories	030	20
Music rooms	050	15
Training shops	030	20
Staff Areas		
Conference rooms	050	20
Offices	070	20
Smoking lounges	007	60

Assembly Rooms

Auditoriums	150	15
Libraries	020	20
Gymnasiums		
Spectator areas	150	15
Playing floor	030	20
Food and Beverage Service		
Cafeteria	100	20
Kitchen	020	15

Miscellaneous

Nurse's offices (patient areas)	010	25
Corridors:	0.1 CFM/square foot	
Locker rooms:	0.5 CFM/square foot	
Restroom:	50 CFM/urinal or water closet	