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Indoor Air Quality Complaint Investigation Protocol

Indoor Air Quality (IAQ) is a term which refers to the air quality within buildings, especially as it relates to the health and comfort of building occupants. In Surrey Schools and sites, the goal is to have the indoor air at least as safe as outdoor air, with parameters within the comfort range for most individuals. When employees, students or parents express concern about the air quality in a room or building, the Indoor Air Quality Complaint Investigation Protocol is followed to investigate and resolve concerns.

Indoor Air Quality (IAQ) Complaint Investigation Protocol

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Indoor Air Quality (IAQ) Complaint Investigation Protocol

General

This protocol is to be used when concerns arise about the quality of the air in occupied areas of Surrey schools and offices. It does not apply in the excepted areas noted in WorkSafeBC Regulation Section 4.70, which reads:

“Sections 4.71 to 4.80 apply to indoor or enclosed areas when occupied by workers, except

- (a) a controlled atmosphere enclosure,
- (b) a confined space, and
- (c) when clearly impracticable, such as during some construction or renovation projects.”[†]

Responsibilities

Employees will report Indoor Air Quality (IAQ) concerns to their supervisor.

Supervisors will investigate the concerns, in consultation with the Site- Based Safety Committee.

Surrey Schools will:

- operate and maintain ventilation systems in accordance with the applicable section of the WorkSafeBC Regulation, and
- investigate IAQ issues in accordance with the applicable section of the WorkSafeBC Regulation.

[†]If concerns arise during construction or renovations, employees should report them to their supervisor who can bring them forward to the Facilities or Building Management Services Departments.

Investigations

Indoor air quality investigations will arise from site-based complaints, for example:

- a) Staff or students experiencing signs or symptoms of illness which they believe may be building-related, e.g. headaches, eye irritation, fatigue, respiratory tract irritations that improve after being away from the site;
- b) Occupancy or type of work done in the space changing substantially;
- c) Significant renovations being made to the ventilation system, or
- d) The presence of mould being suspected, either through visual observation or odour, especially in combination with a recent water leak or burst pipe.

Once an IAQ concern has been reported to the site Administrator, the Administrator will investigate, using the following tools, usually in this order:

- 1. IAQ Inspection Checklist
- 2. IAQ Log kept for three weeks
- 3. IAQ Temperature Log (if applicable)
- 4. IAQ Employee Questionnaire

Resolution

Following these investigation steps, the Administrator, in consultation with the Site-Based Safety Committee, should attempt to resolve the concern by using some of the corrective actions suggested in the IAQ Corrective Actions Checklist.

If the issue can't be resolved at the site level it must be forwarded for further action to Surrey Schools Health & Safety at 604-572-0574.

Indoor Air Quality Concern Flow Chart

Report

- Employee(s) with Indoor Air Quality Concern(s) report them to Principal or Manager

Investigate

- Principal or Manager investigates.
 - Investigation tools are:
 - IAQ Inspection Checklist
 - IAQ Log
 - IAQ Employee Questionnaire
 - IAQ Temperature Log

Resolve

- Resolve the issue at the school/site level, if possible.
 - Resolution tool:
 - IAQ Corrective Actions List**
- If resolution is not possible by school/site, contact Surrey Schools Health & Safety for further assistance.

INDOOR AIR QUALITY INSPECTION CHECKLIST

For each room or area where indoor air quality is a concern, check for the following:

1. Odours that don't dissipate within the first hour after the ventilation system comes on in the morning. If this is the case:
 - a. try to describe the odour: _____
 - b. try to determine which part of the room smells the strongest: _____

2. Signs of water ingress or water damage:

a. Wet or stained ceiling tiles	yes	no
b. Wet or stained carpet	yes	no
c. Wet or stained woodwork	yes	no
d. Visible mould on surfaces	yes	no
e.		

3. Indication that the ventilation system is not functioning:

a. Usual sound of air handling unit is absent	yes	no
b. A strip of paper taped to the diffuser in the ceiling doesn't flutter in the air stream	yes	no

4. Presence of strongly scented items:

a. Perfume/cologne	yes	no
b. Flowers	yes	no
c. Air fresheners	yes	no
d. Chemicals (paints, cleaners,)	yes	no
e. Other	yes	no

5. Excess dust on flat surfaces or dust "bunnies"

	yes	no
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6. Presence of items that harbor dust-mites:

a. Upholstered furniture	yes	no
b. Pillows/blankets	yes	no
c. Stuffed animals	yes	no
d. Piles of papers/items that can't be dusted	yes	no
e. Other	yes	no

7. 7. Presence of animals:

a. Wanted, in cage	yes	no
b. Unwanted, signs of rodent droppings	yes	no

8. 8. Presence of food – related items:

a. Old lunches or mouldy juice box recycling	yes	no
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INDOOR AIR QUALITY CONCERN EMPLOYEE QUESTIONNAIRE

Site: _____

Specific Location: _____

Room/Area: _____

Date: _____

Completed by: _____

Type of concern(s): (check box)

- Temperature too cold
- Temperature too hot
- Ventilation problem (stuffy feeling)
- Dust in the air
- Noticeable odors
- Other (specify)

Description of concern:

1. Please describe when these problems occur (i.e. morning, afternoon, all day, specific day/time):

2. Describe each symptom or adverse health effect you experience:

3. When do the above symptoms clear up?

4. Your work place location in the building is:

5. Briefly describe your primary job tasks:

6. Any other comments or observation concerning your work place environment:



**INDOOR AIR QUALITY LOG
ROOM TEMPERATURE LOG**

Site: _____

Specific Location: _____

Room/Area: _____

Date: _____

Completed by: _____

Type of concern(s): (check box)

- Temperature too cold
- Temperature too hot

Enter the temperature, as measured by a thermometer at the start of the day, mid-morning, mid-afternoon, and at the end of the day. Initial each logged entry. If a log entry time is missed, leave the cell blank and carry on with the next entry period.

Day of the Week	Start of the Day	Initials	Mid Morning	Initials	Mid Afternoon	Initials	End of the Day	Initials
Monday								
Tuesday								
Wednesday								
Thursday								
Friday								
Monday								
Tuesday								
Wednesday								
Thursday								
Friday								



IAQ Corrective Actions List

Resolving indoor air quality (IAQ) issues can be a complicated task, as there are many variables to consider, and it can rarely be established with certainty that the indoor air is the reason for an individual's health symptoms.

The list below provides some simple first steps that should be taken to attempt to resolve the IAQ issue(s). Review the information gathered from the IAQ Log, IAQ Questionnaire(s), IAQ Room Temperature Log (if applicable), and the IAQ Inspection Checklist, then try some of the following:

1) Remove or Dispose of:

- a. Upholstered furniture, pillows, blankets, bean bag chairs, stuffed animals (or have them professionally cleaned).
- b. Any mould-covered items you find, e.g. old lunches, rags, soccer balls, gym shorts, rice, etc.
- c. Scented products, e.g. air fresheners, strong smelling flowers, chemicals.
- d. Juice box recycling.
- e. Plants

2) Move any items that block the supply air diffuser, return air grille or the thermostat.

3) Consult your Assistant Manager, Service Operations, if you have concerns about your janitorial services. Please note that although flat surfaces are to be wiped down once per week, the caretaker can't wipe them if they are covered in stuff – they must be kept reasonably clear.

4) Place a work order if:

- a. You don't think the ventilation system is moving any air
- b. There is rotting wood/drywall that needs replacement
- c. The temperature is frequently outside of the ranges indicated on the IAQ Room Temperature Log
- d. An unpleasant smell appears to be coming from plumbing fixtures – sinks, drains

Taking some of the actions above may help to resolve the indoor air quality issues of concern. If they don't, the next step is to contact Health & Safety at 604-572-0574, to initiate the next level of investigation.