

EHSCP Indoor Air Quality IAQ Investigations: What Works; What Doesn't?

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September 11, 2012

General IAQ Thoughts

- Constant issue – will always be present – ebbs and flows
- Have to determine if it's a real IAQ issue, or a personal (i.e., hypersensitive) or personnel (i.e., management) issue
- Take them seriously and investigate – employee's perception of your efforts is critical. And ensure you communicate efforts to employees
- Most IAQ investigations can be handled by local personnel, with guidance from EHS & Real Estate
- EHS is often the voice of reason, and can help calm employees. Employees can get very concerned for no logical reason – but their perception is important, and must be managed

Personnel to Involve

- Typically a multi-organizational approach – involve facilities/real estate, human resources, local management, legal, risk management
- Local Human Resources should be spoken with privately – are there other issues going on that are affecting employees (performance, management/supervision issues, anticipated upcoming layoffs, home/personal issues?)
- Speak with the concerned employee's supervisor who often provides valuable information

Practical Suggestions

- Don't oversample for chemical constituents – many IAQ investigations can be handled by limited or no sampling
- Appearances are important – cleaning the work environment is important, and can reduce complaints. Example – dusty diffusers & stained ceiling tiles can make the inhabitants to believe the ducts are dirty/moldy.
- Try to make a positive change – even if it isn't expected to have a noticeable effect – cleaning air diffusers is a good example – clean them as they start to get dirty – NOT after an employee has noticed them and is convinced their ducts are full of mold and dust.



Practical Suggestions (continued)

- Consider regional issues based on climate if you are diagnosing remotely – different regions can have diverse issues (high humidity vs. dryness)
- Look at Lease agreements, and when they expire – often best to encourage a relocation if there are a lot of historical issues in a space
- Allergies – people change over time – getting tested for allergies is warranted periodically
- Need to make sure everyone is accountable and responsible. Be careful on what people are allowed to bring in to their offices/cubes – what is fine for one, may be very annoying for someone else

Practical Suggestions (continued)

- Mold issues are tricky & sensitive – testing often leads to more questions than answers
- Local management can be concerned about OSHA - rarely will OSHA investigate (unless very serious) – sometimes receive employee complaint letter.
- Never have had a citation on IAQ, but many employee complaint letters
- Odors. What can I say? What I think smells great, may be offensive to others. Curry, fish, perfumes, or animals?
- Related issues to IAQ – not strictly IAQ – bats, bedbugs, facility changes, etc.

Specific Guidelines/Fact Sheets

- Sprint has developed the following resources:
 - Indoor Air Quality Guidelines
 - IAQ in Call Centers
 - IAQ during Office Renovations
 - IAQ - Mold Guidelines for Facility Operations
 - IAQ - Radon
- Websites
 - EPA: <http://www.epa.gov/iaq/>
 - CDC: <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/indoorenv/>
 - OSHA: <http://www.osha.gov/SLTC/indoorairquality/index.html>