INDOOR AIR QUALITY

Indoor air quality (IAQ) is the subject of much attention these days, and for good reason. There is more and more evidence that the quality of the indoor environment can have an effect on the health of building occupants. Although serious health problems related to IAQ are rare, the perception of endangered health is increasingly common among building occupants. It is important to know that the causes and consequences of poor IAQ are a long way from being completely understood.

Potential Sources of Contaminants

- Airborne chemicals, bacteria, fungi, pollen, dust, vehicle exhaust, cleaning supplies, pesticides, building materials, furnishings, occupant respiration and perspiration, and cosmetics as well as non-air quality factors (temperature, humidity, lighting, noise, housekeeping levels, and pre-existing health conditions) can all contribute to the problem
- Serious IAQ problems occur when problems are not identified and controlled (e.g., water intrusion must be removed in 24 – 48 hrs to reduce the risk for microbial growth)

Guidelines for Good IAQ

- Report poor indoor air quality conditions (stuffy air, heat or cooling problems) to Physical Plant Help Service Desk 827-4214 (M-F, 8am to 4:30pm) or 827-4677 (all other hours)
- Report bad odors or symptoms (eye irritation, headaches) to EH&S 827-5528, or 9-1-1 for emergencies
- Don’t use strong aromas (heavy perfume/ colognes, air fresheners, oil-based paints, solvents, pesticides, plant fertilizers)
- Don’t smoke in campus buildings – it’s prohibited by law!
- Limit use of equipment that generates excessive heat, or produces odors, to specifically designed rooms
- Don’t install carpeting in offices or work areas (if you have carpeting in your work area, have it vacuumed and cleaned regularly)
- Minimize generation of dust or aerosols in work area
- Add water to floor and other drains not used frequently to prevent odors from the sewer
- Maintain good housekeeping in the work area and break areas (throw away garbage, "old" lunches and clean any spills immediately)
- Keep refrigerator drip pans clean
- Periodically inspect electrical equipment to prevent overheating
- The best method to control indoor air contaminants depends on the source(s) causing the concerns (source control is the most effective solution)
- Modification of the ventilation system may also be an effective method

Contact EH&S at 827-5528 or www.ehs.ucr.edu to answer or personally respond to any concerns about your work area. In some situations, EH&S will initiate further investigation including inspection of the building and monitoring for airborne or surface contaminants.