



ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE	
<i>Approval Date</i> May 2009	<i>Replacing</i> All previous policies
<i>Review Date</i> 2014	<i>Page</i> 1 of 3
<i>Contact Person/Department</i> Superintendent of Business	<i>Identification</i> BU - 3550

INVESTIGATING INDOOR AIR QUALITY PROBLEMS

1.0 PURPOSE

Most educational activities take place indoors and considering the climate, design and construction of schools, it has become necessary to clarify the procedures for investigating health concerns as they relate to indoor air quality. Some of the health problems attributed to poor air quality include headaches, excessive fatigue, difficulty in concentration, shortness of breath, skin irritation, dried throat, nose bleed, eye irritation, recurring flu, fever, cough, tightness in the chest, dizziness, retching and vomiting.

The Ontario Inter-Ministerial Committee developed the protocol on indoor air quality.

2.0 REFERENCES/RELATED DOCUMENTS

- 2.1 *Occupational Health and Safety Act and Regulations*
- 2.2 *Ontario Building Code*
- 2.3 *Ontario Inter-Ministerial Committee Protocol*
- 2.4 *Incident/Accident/Injury Reporting and Investigation Procedures/Forms - BU-3555*
- 2.5 *Indoor Air Quality Investigation Questionnaire*

3.0 TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

- 3.1 Indoor Air Quality – the acceptable indoor environment as established by regulations, codes and standards.

4.0 ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE

- 4.1 STAGE ONE - OBSERVATION ONLY - Requires no instruments:
 - 4.1.1 Workers experiencing symptoms relating to indoor air quality must report the concerns to the principal in writing (use complaint form) or a written report.

- 4.1.2 The principal, with the assistance of the custodian, if necessary, will immediately observe the operation of the school and answer the following questions:
- i) Could carbon monoxide or any other combustible by-product be present?
 - ii) What are other pollutant sources?
 - iii) Are there problems with Heating, Refrigeration, Air-conditioning or Ventilation (HVAC) system?
 - iv) Are maintenance schedules for the HVAC system adhered to?
 - v) Is the operation of the HVAC system acceptable?
 - vi) Have all ventilation concerns been addressed ?

If the cause of the problem is not identified, the questionnaire in stage-two should be completed immediately.

4.2 STAGE TWO - QUESTIONNAIRE

- 4.2.1 The attached questionnaire is designed to evaluate the extent staff is affected and the areas which may likely have problems.
- 4.2.2 The principal will request staff to complete the indoor air quality questionnaire and inform the JOH&S site member that this stage has commenced.
- 4.2.3 All staff concerned with the indoor air quality in the school will complete the questionnaire and submit the completed questionnaire to the principal on the same day the questionnaire is requested.
- 4.2.4 The principal will prepare a summary of the answers from the questionnaire and submit the report and the questionnaire to the Assistant Superintendent of Business.

If the questionnaire shows a high frequency of symptoms among staff, then stage three of the investigation should be conducted.

4.3 STAGE THREE - SIMPLE FIELD MEASUREMENT

- 4.3.1 This stage involves field measurement with simple instruments. Expert investigators would not be required to perform these tests. They include measurements of temperature, relative humidity, carbon dioxide, formaldehyde, carbon monoxide and air movement.

- 4.3.2 The appropriate Manager of the Maintenance Department will arrange for the testing of the affected areas in the school.
- 4.3.3 The school principal and the safety representative will be informed about the tests before they are conducted.
- 4.3.4 The results of the tests will be submitted to the principal, the safety representative and the co-chairs of the Joint Health and Safety Committee.

Only if the first three stages fail to identify the source of the problem should stage four be conducted as soon as possible.

4.4 STAGE FOUR - PROFESSIONAL ASSESSMENT

- 4.4.1 This stage involves the use of professionals (hygienists, doctors) to further assess the situation. The professional may test for the presence of microorganisms, breathable suspended particulate, organic vapours, ozone, nitrogen oxides and asbestos.
- 4.4.2 The Assistant Superintendent of Business in consultation with the Manager of the Maintenance Department will arrange for the testing of the affected areas in the school by a professional.
- 4.4.3 The school principal and the site member will be informed about the tests before they are conducted.
- 4.4.4 The results of the tests and recommendations will be submitted to the principal, the site member and the co-chairs of the Joint Health and Safety Committee.