



Tailgate Safety Talks for School Employees

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Indoor Air Quality in Schools

Air pollution is ever-present, indoors or out. Good IAQ contributes to a favorable learning environment for our students, protects health, and supports the overall productivity of school personnel. In recent years, indoor air pollution has increased due to the construction of tightly sealed buildings, the reduction of ventilation to save energy, the use of synthetic building materials and furnishings, and the use of chemically formulated personal products, pesticides, and cleaning supplies. Schools in poor repair with leaky roofs and crumbling walls may have caused additional indoor air quality problems, including contamination with lead and asbestos, dust, or radon.

Our environment uniquely affects children's health. Children are growing up with complex environmental threats to their health ranging from asthma inducing air pollution to toxic chemicals. Children are more vulnerable to environmental health risks because: 1) their bodies are still developing, 2) they proportionally eat, drink, and breathe more per pound of body weight than adults, 3) they are exposed to more environmental threats, and 4) they are least able to identify or to protect themselves from exposures to different environmental hazards

Simple changes to improve your school's IAQ:

Open fresh air intakes. Use low-odor, low-toxicity supplies. Enforce smoking bans. Discourage perfumes and colognes. Move bus idling areas away from building. Remove wet, moldy carpets. Ban upholstered furniture in classrooms. Use nontoxic methods to control pests.

- Have a district-wide committee that addresses IAQ and other environmental concerns. This committee can be part of a "Health and Safety Committee". The following groups should have representation on the committee; parent/community members, school nurse, facility director, central administration, teachers, support staff, and other unions represented in the school district.
- Have building-level committees that address specific concerns. Again, parents and staff should be represented on the committee.
- Have a report form available to parents and school personnel for reporting environmental quality questions and concerns.
- Keep a formal record of health symptoms that are reported to schools nurses.
- Regularly train staff on health and safety issues.

