

School Indoor Air Quality

What is indoor air quality?

Indoor air quality (IAQ) is the quality of air inside an enclosed space, such as a building or a school bus. Air quality can be adversely affected by several factors including chemicals present in building materials, mold due to water damage, and dirty air filters.

What are the IAQ responsibilities of CFL and local school boards?

The Department of Children, Families and Learning (CFL) must provide each school district with information concerning IAQ as part of the consultation required for any school district building project for which the estimated cost exceeds \$250,000.

A school board proposing to construct a facility that requires an expenditure in excess of \$500,000 must submit information to CFL describing how IAQ issues have been considered and certifying that the architects and engineers designing the facility will have professional liability insurance.

Prior to occupying or reoccupying a school facility in which the heating, ventilation, or air conditioning (HVAC) systems have been installed or retrofitted, a school board or its designee must submit a document prepared by a system inspector to the local building official or to CFL verifying that the facility's HVAC system has been installed and operates according to design specifications and code.

If the document submitted by the school board to the local building official or CFL does not demonstrate to that official's satisfaction that the HVAC system has been installed correctly or that the system is not operating at a level to meet design specifications, the official or CFL may allow up to one year of occupancy while the HVAC system is improved to a level that is considered satisfactory by the system inspector.

Does the federal government provide any IAQ information or assistance?

The Environmental Protection Agency provides free *IAQ Tools for Schools* kits to schools. The kit is a flexible, comprehensive resource for school building health and includes easy-to-follow checklists, videos, sample memos and policies, a recommended management plan, and a unique IAQ problem-solving wheel.

How are school IAQ projects funded?

School district IAQ projects are funded primarily through capital budgets and health and safety revenue. Major capital projects are generally approved by the local taxpayers; however, on a few occasions, the legislature has responded with special legislation for a school district with IAQ problems.

What are some potential legislative issues?

There are two IAQ issues related to school buses that were discussed during the 2002 legislative session and may be discussed again. The first IAQ issue is concern about the air quality on school buses due to several reports indicating that diesel exhaust fumes are harmful to children's health. The second IAQ issue is concern over the placement of school building air intake valves in relation to the school bus loading and unloading area.

Another potential legislative issue is mandating in statute certain minimum standards for air flow or prohibiting certain building or furnishing materials, since these factors are known to affect IAQ.