EPA's Indoor Air Quality Tools for Schools

Summer Tips

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) knows that indoor air concerns do not stop with the ending of the school year and vacating of the facility for the summer. This is the best time to establish and re-evaluate cleaning and maintenance practices throughout the facility to ensure that the fall session begins with quality indoor air.

Please consider these Summer Tips as the school year ends for the summer and you begin your annual cleaning.

- ❑ Schools in humid climates that are closed up over the summer may need to keep ventilation running and monitor humidity levels within the building to a level below 60 percent. Also, a weekly check for mold growth (sight and smell) is a good practice.
- ❑ Proper choice of cleaners, adhesives, paints, pesticides, solvents, carpeting, equipment, and furnishings can reduce the fumes from these chemical products. Take the time to consider toxic-free products and read the labels.
- ❑ Always mix solutions according to label directions and store in proper containers.
- ❑ Use only recommended amounts of pesticides and dispose of safely.
- ❑ Interior painting requires adequate ventilation. Use non-toxic paints and renovation materials when possible.
- ❑ Open windows or run air handlers on full outdoor air to reduce chemical fumes from new furnishings until noticeable odors are no longer present.
- ❑ Maintain and adjust combustion appliances and ensure proper venting to the outside.
- ❑ Make sure carpeting is thoroughly cleaned and dried to avoid mold growth.
  (Wet Carpeting + No Ventilation = MOLD)
- ❑ Check roof for existing leaks and fix properly, and routinely inspect during the summer months for any new leaks.
- ❑ Ventilation - make sure all vents are cleaned and not blocked. Look for books on ventilators, plywood covering outdoor air intakes, blocked ceiling vents, etc.
- ❑ Replace burned out bulbs in light fixtures and make any necessary repairs.
- ❑ Use high efficiency filters in the HVAC system to remove small particles, and develop a routine schedule for filter replacement. Also check for presence of fungal growth.
- ❑ Use preventive measures in pre-1978 constructed schools to reduce lead exposure where paint is chipping and peeling.
- ❑ Replace stained ceiling tiles and make sure the source of moisture has been eliminated.
- ❑ Keep water in drain traps to prevent passage of sewer gas.
- ❑ Control dust and dust mites by keeping relative humidity below 60 percent.
- ❑ Classroom clutter should be minimal and art and science supplies stored properly.
- ❑ Check windows and doors for breaks and air leaks and repair properly.
- ❑ New equipment items purchased should be quiet, energy-efficient, and durable.
- ❑ Now is the time to consider removing carpeting around water fountains to prevent fungal growth, and to add door mats at all entrances.

Visit EPA's Tools for Schools Web site at www.epa.gov/iaq/schools for a free IAQ Tools for Schools Action Kit.