

OUT OF BREATH?

HOW IS YOUR CHILD'S SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT AFFECTING THEIR HEALTH ?

"Don't forget your jacket!" or "Its too cold for short sleeves today". Two common statements parents make protect children from environmental hazards as they walk to their local school. But what do we do to ensure their safety after they arrive there? Recently, the U.S. Department of Education commissioned a paper to discover just what effects our schools environment may be having on our children's health, academic performance and attendance. In this study it was ultimately concluded, "that poor environments in schools, due primarily to the effects of indoor pollutants,

adversely influence the health, performance, and attendance of students." These pollutants include mold, chemical pollutants such as formaldehyde, and lead. Standards are in place to protect our workers from environmental hazards. However, these are not designed to protect our children. A student's time in school often exceeds that of a typical adult workweek. This results in a greater chance for exposure to any indoor pollutants. In addition, children have greater susceptibility to some environmental pollutants than adults, because they breathe higher volumes of air rela-

tive to their body weights and their tissues and organs are actively growing. Thus, although workplace standards for pollutants may not be exceeded for a substance, they may still contribute to the adverse health effects associated with poor IEQ in a school setting. Ultimately, as parents we must take action to ensure that the air our children breathe in schools must be made safe.



CHILDREN AT HIGHER CANCER RISK

Since 2003, the federal government has formally acknowledged that children are more vulnerable to the effects of carcinogens than adults. The average carcinogen that damaged DNA according to the government was found to be 10 times more potent during childhood than in adulthood. The most recent guidelines (March 2005) for carcino-

gen risk assessment, distributed by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency also confirm this. What does this mean to us? How do we protect our children? The answer is to become involved with your local schools safety and hazard program and ask how they are preventing our children's exposure to cancer causing materials. Being a biased

paint manufacturer, I would ask about each school districts policy on indoor air quality. Did you know that 99% of all water based paints have known carcinogens! Each schools air quality is directly affected by the "off-gassing" (evaporation) of the very paint on the walls! This can be in affect causing our children cancer!

Asthma at a Glance:

- 21.9 million adults in the U.S. have been diagnosed with asthma.¹
- 8.9 million children under 18 have been diagnosed with asthma.¹
- 7.7 million adults and 4.2 million children under 18 report having had an asthma attack in 2002.¹
- More than 70 percent of people with asthma also have allergies.²
- 10 million Americans suffer specifically from allergic asthma.³
- Asthma accounts for 14.7 million missed school days and 11.8 million missed work days annually.¹

¹ "Asthma Prevalence: Health Care Use and Mortality, 2002," National Center for Health Statistics, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

² "Understanding Allergy and Asthma," National Library of Medicine, National Institutes of Health.

³ American Academy of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology, "Asthma Statistics."

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