



Background Information for School Official's Checklist

GENERAL ROLE

School officials (including superintendents, principals, chief operating officers (COOs), and chief financial officers (CFOs)) play a key role in an indoor air quality (IAQ) program's direction and success. They must, for example, ensure that the IAQ Team and Coordinator have the authority and budget necessary to adequately address IAQ issues in the school. IAQ projects, as well as district-wide IAQ programs, should be approved by the school board and authorized by the CFO and/or the superintendent.

Communication is crucial to the success of an IAQ program. Officials often serve as liaisons between the IAQ Coordinator, the school board, unions, and the community—especially parents and the media. By promoting effective communication between these groups, school officials can quickly help resolve and reduce tension surrounding IAQ issues quickly, before they become a crisis.

School officials should introduce the IAQ Coordinator to the school district and school staff and describe his or her role in the program. It is also important for officials to consistently update the school board on the IAQ needs of the school and the program's progress to ensure their support.

It is often advisable to establish processes to address situations involving unions. Unions representing school employees can be valuable allies since they are often involved in negotiating or discussing working conditions that directly relate to IAQ. For example, when changes in physical plant, maintenance, or work schedules are needed to improve IAQ, schools and unions will need to work together to resolve these issues.

School officials can attain local and national recognition for their IAQ efforts by providing both verbal and written support for the program. Gaining written support from all top-level management officials is an important first step toward launching an IAQ program. School officials should also write a letter to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), notifying EPA that the school and/or school district is developing an IAQ program that has been endorsed by the school officials. This notification makes the school eligible to receive the EPA Great Start Award, which can lead to positive publicity in the community and long-term support for the program. After implementing the IAQ program, schools and districts can apply for Leadership and Excellence Awards, which recognize exemplary programs across the nation.

IAQ MANAGEMENT PLAN

School officials are often responsible for authorizing and developing a district-wide IAQ Management Plan. The plan can ensure that IAQ policies and upgrades are consistent among schools and address issues such as integrated pest management, radon, building maintenance, inadequate ventilation, mobile source pollution, and asthma triggers. Refer to the *IAQ Coordinator's Guide* for guidance on developing and implementing an IAQ Management Plan.

To ensure ongoing support and coordination for an IAQ program, school officials need to communicate the IAQ Team's accomplishments to the school board, staff, unions, and community.

Instructions

Read this section before completing the School Official's Checklist.

PLANNING FOR EMERGENCIES

School officials play an instrumental role in responding to IAQ emergencies. Developing an emergency plan can help officials quickly and effectively address an IAQ crisis. The plan should outline the procedure(s) for handling emergency situations (for example, a mold problem or an outbreak of an IAQ-related illness). In particular, the plan should identify the appropriate contact person(s) who will communicate with the media. School officials should notify the school staff about the contact person and emphasize that only this person should speak to the press. Updating the press and the community with accurate information from a reliable source can control rumors and misunderstandings as well as minimize future negative press associated with an IAQ crisis.

