

The Local Board of Health Environmental Health Primer Air Quality Factsheet



ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

Background

Outdoor Air

- Air quality is important because of continuous exposure to air and potential contaminants through normal breathing functions.
- Community environmental consequences that result from poor air quality include acid rain, smog, and nuisance odor problems.

Indoor Air

- Indoor air quality is a concern because most Americans spend 90% or more of their time indoors.
- A variety of chemical (e.g., cleaners, smoke, gases) and biological (e.g., molds, fungus spores, dander) pollutants may affect indoor air quality.
- Mold, radon, carbon monoxide, and formaldehyde are some indoor air contaminants of concern.
- Indoor air quality at specialized places, such as schools or indoor pools, should be monitored as well.

Board of Health Actions

- Aid in state and federal monitoring efforts; issue air pollution advisories; provide input into issuing permits; and provide advice to homeowners, schools, and the public on indoor air quality.
- Take important leadership roles by managing resources in a crisis and providing access to information.
- Other actions should include: eliminating tobacco smoke in public places, eliminating idling buses and cars at schools, developing mold remediation policies, encouraging public transportation, developing media campaigns that inform people about environmental triggers, supplying radon test kits, developing healthy home campaigns, and recommending or developing programs to address asthma problems.

Resources for Continuing Education

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Healthy Homes Initiative. Available at www.cdc.gov/nceh/lead/healthyhomes.htm
- Environmental Protection Agency. Indoor Air Quality. Available at www.epa.gov/iaq/
- National Association of Local Boards of Health. (2011). Air Quality. In *The Local Board of Health Environmental Health Primer* (2nd ed.).

© 2011 National Association of Local Boards of Health