

FACT SHEET



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Tools for Office Buildings

An Indoor Environmental Quality Program

What is *Tools for Office Buildings* (TfOB)?

Tools for Office Buildings is a program coordinated by the Connecticut Department of Public Health (CTDPH) aimed at improving the quality of the indoor environment in office buildings. This is accomplished by training a team from the office who then conduct a comprehensive building assessment. It is modeled after the successful Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) *Tools for Schools* Program. This is a practical, easy to do program.

Why Initiate the *Tools for Office Buildings* Program?

Poor indoor air can contribute to multiple health problems that can result in lower productivity. Many of the contributing factors to poor indoor air in the office can be prevented before they begin by having a good maintenance program that identifies physical plant problems early, addresses them appropriately in an expeditious manner and engages the employees of the building as partners in maintaining space that is conducive to good housekeeping.



How is *Tools for Office Buildings* Implemented?

Tools for Office Buildings is a proactive, preventive, team-based program that looks for low cost/no cost solutions to indoor environment problems. Implementation steps include:

1. Form a team of people representative of the occupants of the building and select a team coordinator. (Management)
2. Train the team on indoor environment quality issues and program implementation. (CTDPH)
3. Complete checklists for each work area. (Staff)
4. Complete checklists for common areas such as conference rooms and lobby areas, and building and grounds checklists that incorporate maintenance and ventilation. (Team)
5. Conduct a walkthrough investigation of the building. (Team)
6. Summarize data collected and identify problems. (Team)
7. Establish priorities based on health effects, cost and ease of implementation. (Team)
8. Produce a written report for management to review. (Team)
9. Take action to address the identified problems. (Management)

A successful program has the strong support of the office and building management.

What is the Time Commitment?

The time commitment will vary depending on the size of the building, the number of people on the TfOB team, and the time frame set for completion. Initially, the time commitment by staff on the team will include 2 two-hour trainings and a minimum of ten additional hours over a period of 4-5 months. Some of the responsibilities can be divided among team members. The team coordinator will need to spend an additional 2-4 hours. After implementation is completed, the program should be reviewed at least once a year.

What are the Outcomes?

Tools for Office Buildings will put procedures in place to maintain a healthy working environment that complement the existing maintenance procedures. The program emphasizes that maintaining a good indoor environment in the office is a shared responsibility between the occupants and the building management. It stresses the importance of communication and educates the building occupants on factors that can affect the office environment and how they can play a role in improving the workplace. This raises awareness of indoor environmental issues and leads to a positive partnership among the occupants of the office building.

How Do I Get a Program Started in My Office Building?

Call the Connecticut Department of Public Health Environmental and Occupational Health Assessment Program at 860-5099-7742 to arrange for a presentation to the building management/administration. Once the program is outlined and support is received, a date for the first training can be scheduled.

Where Can I Get More Information?

For additional information, contact Joan Simpson at the Connecticut Department of Public Health Environmental and Occupational Health Assessment Program: joan.simpson@ct.gov ; 860-509-7742.