



November 3, 2016

Dear Education Partner:

The enclosed fact sheet provides information and resources so that any school can take proactive steps to protect children's health. It is intended to provide basic good practices to help address environmental health issues that you may encounter in the course of maintaining school facilities.

Recent information from schools nationwide suggest that there was potentially widespread use of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCB) containing building materials used in schools and other public buildings built or renovated between about 1950 and 1979. Some common sources where PCBs may have been used include fluorescent light ballasts, caulk, paint and other coatings. This is an important issue because PCBs are probable human carcinogens and may cause other non-cancer health effects. Building occupants may be exposed to PCBs through inhalation of indoor air. Young children face additional exposure potential through hand-to-mouth ingestion of PCB-containing dust and residues present on building surfaces.

In response to this information, the Association of California School Administrators (ACSA), California Association of School Business Officials (CASBO), California School Boards Association (CSBA), and the Coalition for Adequate School Housing (CASH), distributed an initial guidance letter on September 8, 2014 to all of our respective members regarding PCBs in public schools.

PCBs are, however, only one common school contaminant. Other environmental issues that may be present in schools include lead in paint, asbestos, volatile organic compounds from building materials, pesticides and mold. Research suggests that an unhealthy school environment can affect children's health, attendance, concentration, and performance. Schools in better physical condition generally report better academic performance.

To put this in perspective, 6.2 million California children attend public schools throughout the state. Poor environmental conditions at schools can lead to loss of school days, impacting a child's learning opportunities. Knowledge and preventative measures can lead to improved indoor air quality that will benefit children and adults alike.

To that end, we have worked with federal and state environmental agencies, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), California's Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC), and the California Environmental Protection Agency (CalEPA), to prepare a fact sheet with five

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Fact Sheet: 5 Recommended Actions to Reduce Exposures to Common School Contaminants

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recommended actions to reduce exposures to common school contaminants and help ensure a healthy classroom environment.

If you have questions or need additional information, you may contact Amanda Cruz at the US Environmental Protection Agency (cruz.amanda@epa.gov or 415-972-3084) or Mark Malinowski at the Department of Toxic Substances control at (mark.malinowski@dtsc.ca.gov or 916-255-3717). And of course, feel free to contact your association representative below.

Sincerely,



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Creating Healthy Indoor Environments in California Schools

1. Ensure good ventilation

Proper maintenance of ventilation and filtration equipment plays a big role in the quality of indoor air. Ensure that ventilation systems are operating properly, regularly inspected, and maintained according to system manufacturer guidelines or ANSI/ASHRAE/ACCA Standard 180-2012. Do not use humidifiers in classrooms.



2. Reduce indoor dust

- Use wet instead of dry cleaning methods
- Use HEPA filter vacuums
- Clean classrooms frequently to keep dust levels low
- Use walk-off mats

For more information on best cleaning practices, visit: <http://www.epa.gov/iaq-schools/technical-solutions-common-indoor-air-quality-issues-schools#tab-4>.

3. Purchase less toxic cleaning products

“Safer Choice” and “Green Seal” labeled products help consumers, businesses, and purchasers find products that perform well and are safer for use in schools. Fragrance free products are safer for children with asthma. For more information, see U.S. EPA’s Safer Choice webpage at: <http://www.epa.gov/saferchoice>.

4. Replace older Fluorescent Light Ballasts (FLBs)

Schools built before 1980 should remove all PCB-containing Fluorescent Light Ballasts to minimize exposure to PCBs. Fixtures should also be replaced when FLBs are found to be leaking. For more information, refer to <http://www.epa.gov/epawaste/hazard/tsd/pcbs/pubs/ballasts.htm>. This work may qualify for state funding under Proposition 39.

5. Adopt Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Practices

Reducing food and water sources for pests reduces your reliance on pesticides and saves your school money. Seal cracks, install window and door screens, and don’t bring in pesticides from home. For more information and resources on IPM refer to California’s Department of Pesticide Regulation webpage: <http://apps.cdpr.ca.gov/schoolipm/>.

Benefits of Healthy Indoor Environment School Environment

Reduce absenteeism
Improve academic performance
Avoid short and long-term health effects

Creating Healthy Indoor Environments in California Schools

6.2 million Californian children attend public schools



Healthy indoor school environments reduce school days missed each year



Fact: Children are more *vulnerable* to environmental contaminants than adults

Common Potential Contaminants

- **Volatile Organic Compound (VOCs)**
VOCs enter air from some adhesives, carpets, and composite wood; they are also released by copy machines, pesticides, and cleaning agents.
- **Polychlorinated Biphenyls (PCBs)**
PCBs can be found in caulk and fluorescent light ballasts in buildings built before 1980.
- **Mold and Pathogens**
Moisture in central air systems or humidifiers can become breeding grounds for mold and pathogens (such as Legionella) and distribute them throughout a building.
- **Particulates**
Particulates can accumulate in classrooms from outdoor sources such as dust, smoke and exhaust as well as certain indoor heaters.
- **Lead**
Lead dust can be created from disturbance or contact with flaking or decomposing lead-based paint.
- **Asbestos**
Asbestos can be released from flaking or disturbed ceiling and floor tiles, and insulation manufactured with asbestos.
- **Pesticides**
Pesticides may be used in schools both indoors and outdoors to control pests.

Useful Links:

1. Practical Actions for Reducing PCB Exposures in Schools and Other Buildings
http://www.epa.gov/wastes/hazard/tsd/pcbs/pubs/caulk/pdf/pcb_fs_v7.pdf
2. Rebate Information for Fluorescent Light Ballasts
<http://www.energy.ca.gov/efficiency/proposition39/index.html>
3. School Indoor Air Quality Assessment Mobile App
<http://www.epa.gov/iaq-schools/school-iaq-assessment-mobile-app>