1. **How can I get help with indoor air quality problems?**

Where possible, contact you departmental or college safety officer or safety liaison at your location.  If you need further assistance, contact the EHS office at 814-865-6391.  You may also refer to the EHS website at:  <https://ehs.psu.edu/indoor-air-quality/requirements-guidelines>

1. **When should I reach out for help if I have indoor air quality concerns or I feel the indoor air quality may be affecting my health?**

You should initially contact your departmental Safety Officer, or campus safety contact any time you have questions or concerns about indoor air quality.  You may also reach the EHS office for assistance.

1. **What steps should I take to address indoor air quality concerns or complaints?**

Indoor air quality concerns should be initially reported to the college or departmental Safety Officer, campus safety contact, or the EHS Regional Coordinator.  EHS will conduct a cursory phone review to gather information, and in many cases conduct a site review, which involves observing conditions, discussing concerns with affected persons, and taking certain measurements.  EHS may conduct or arrange further specialized sampling, and/or provide recommended follow-up actions.  These may include actions by the college/department, campus, and/or Office of Physical Plant (OPP).  In cases where employees are experiencing health symptoms, these should be reported to their supervisor.  Where recurring or unresolved, the affected employee should initiate a “First Report of Injury (FROI) through their supervisor or designated location representative.  Once completed or simultaneously, the employee may then be referred to PS Occupational Medicine or the designated panel provider for consultation.  Based on available information or request, EHS will follow-up to support resolution of the IAQ concerns.  EHS can be contacted at any time to answer questions, and for assistance and support.

1. **When is testing needed to evaluate my work area for indoor air quality?**

Following a complaint where there are unresolved or recurring odors (chemical or biological, exhaust, etc.), visual mold growth or water infiltration, or in cases where personnel are experiencing health symptoms that may be related to the building, EHS will conduct an initial evaluation including a visual exam, which may include assistance by OPP or campus maintenance in coordination with the safety officer or liaison.  Following the initial evaluation, EHS may arrange or conduct further specialized testing to evaluate the source, or magnitude of contaminants, particularly where needed to support further actions.

1. **How long will it take to get testing results?**

Following a site review, EHS will provide a summary email report typically within a few days to the pertinent work units and safety officer(s), with any follow-up recommendations.  When further testing is conducted, laboratory analysis typically requires 1-2 weeks with a subsequent laboratory report.  EHS will then contact the pertinent safety officer or department to discuss these results, then issue a summary report with any recommended actions.

1. **What are some factors within a building that can affect indoor air quality?**

Heating, ventilating and air-conditioning (HVAC) systems can be a source of indoor air quality problems.  Such problems may occur as a result of: inadequate or improperly-fitting HVAC filters, inadequate fresh air exchange, equipment limitations or operating conditions in which moisture cannot be effectively removed from humid air, and where air contaminants are drawn into the building through outdoor air intakes.  Other factors may include: indoor sources of contaminants associated with kitchens, lavatories, swimming pools, laboratories, plants, or even new building materials that off-gas contaminants.  Water incursion from leaky pipes, sewage, or rainwater through exterior building walls, roofing, or HVAC pipes can permit mold or bacterial growth.  High humidity can cause condensation or support mold growth.

**7.    How can I tell when mold may be a problem in my building or work area?**

Mold may be an issue in your work area where water leaks or water incursion have occurred and gone undetected, when wetted materials have not been cleaned and dried promptly, or during periods where high humidity has built up in the building and subsequently condensed or been absorbed by soft or porous building materials.  Visible signs of mold growth, particularly if widespread, or moldy or rancid odors are an indication that mold or bacteria are growing indoors.  Contact your safety Officer or site coordinator for assistance, and/or refer these findings to EHS.

Any uncontrolled sources of mold growth indoors should be corrected, to alleviate occupant health concerns.  Similarly, unchecked mold growth will damage building materials and systems.

**8.    Are certain types of mold more toxic or hazardous than others?**

Generally, molds have similar toxicities, and certain types are not more hazardous than others.  Molds may produce spores and volatile compounds, and when growing indoors, particularly with limited air filtration or exchange, these contaminants may produce odors, and irritating effects to the eyes, nose, throat and upper respiratory system, in addition to headaches and general discomfort.  According to the American College of Environmental and Occupational Medicine (ACOEM), mold toxicity is predominantly related to very high exposures, similar to conditions found in agricultural environments, and not to conditions typically found in the indoor environment.  Certain molds may be associated with infection of persons with weakened immune systems, or those who may be on specialized drug or cancer treatments.

Certain persons may have mold allergies, and will develop symptoms similar to hay fever.

**9.    If I see black or colored spots or dirt on air-conditioning vents, is this a hazardous condition?**

In certain buildings, black or dirty tracing can be noticeable on ceilings or on HVAC vents.  This build-up may be a result of several factors:

* Certain duct insulation has a black lining that may slough off as a fine black powder with air movement through the duct,
* Filters may not be effectively collecting dust,
* Humid air may condense on the cold supply vents (from air-conditioning), and collect dirt and mold spores, leading to some possible mildew-like growth on the vent surfaces.

Though these conditions are unsightly and may be similar to mildew growth in bathrooms, these generally do not pose a hazard to occupants; however, the conditions should be inspected and problems corrected as pertinent.

**10.  Can small amounts of mold be safely cleaned or removed?**

Small amounts of mold growth in areas such as bathrooms, around windows, or on ventilation supply vents can occur in some buildings.  These small amounts of mold growth can be safely cleaned using typical cleaning procedures.  If mold growth is seen in several areas or in areas exceeding 3 square feet (as a general guide), or where mold odor is pronounced, contact your Safety Officer or EHS for assistance.

Contact EHS for questions or concerns about mold.  Further information about mold are available at the EHS website at:   <https://ehs.psu.edu/indoor-air-quality/requirements-guidelines>