

IAQ Emergency Response Policy and Protocol

Note: Please check your school and town's existing emergency system before developing one to coordinate with existing efforts and systems, and ensure that they are in sync.

An emergency is defined as an unforeseen circumstance that requires immediate action, assistance, or relief. This includes situations that are potentially life threatening, such as:

- Spills of hazardous materials;
- Complaints of severe headaches, nausea, heart problems, and combustion odors; and
- Diagnosed Legionnaire's disease or tuberculosis.

In addition, emergencies include situations where there is limited time available to prevent serious property damage, such as flooding in a carpeted area or health problems.

It is up to the discretion of the school administrators to identify and react to emergencies on a case-by-case basis. If doubt exists about whether exposure to a specific hazard constitutes an emergency, a precautionary approach may be used where the matter is handled as an emergency.

District officials must respond to emergencies immediately. If the problem cannot be resolved with in-house resources, external help should be acquired (e.g. local health agency, IAQ professionals). If a hazard poses an immediate health threat to the students and staff, the affected building areas must be evacuated. (*Note: each district needs to determine at what point an evacuation would be necessary.*)

All avenues of communication need to be utilized to warn and inform affected or interested parties in a prompt manner.

Non-emergency situations are addressed according to the "IAQ Reporting and Response Policy," defined below

IAQ Reporting and Response Policy

[School district's name] encourages the reporting of IAQ concerns, regardless of how trivial the issue may seem. The prompt reporting and resolution of IAQ issues has the potential to prevent serious problems from developing, which will help to prevent potential health effects, discomfort, and unnecessary costs. This makes the investigation of all reported concerns worthwhile.

The IAQ Coordinator (*note what position this is, e.g. principal, senior custodian*) should request concerned staff, students, and parents to report their IAQ concerns in writing. A written description of the concerns reduces misunderstanding and creates a history that can be referred to at a future date. All complaints shall be put in writing by the complainant and shall follow the "Reporting Process" to initiate an official IAQ concern reporting process. _____ shall

document and inform affected parties of the progress and resolution of the issue in writing about the measures taken. Information collected must be processed and stored according to the school district's recordkeeping policies (each district should reference this system).

Communication Protocol

Communication is a critical element to successful IAQ management. The IAQ Coordinator and other district authorities try to limit misinformation and confusion through the use of effective communication. In order to develop and maintain the trust of the community and staff, the IAQ Coordinator and other designated district employees should communicate with relevant parties in a prompt, honest, and courteous manner until the issue is resolved. Every time an IAQ concern is addressed or resolved, the IAQ Coordinator shall report the measures taken and the resolution of the identified concern to the appropriate parties.

In the unlikely event of an IAQ emergency, the district will accommodate the needs of students, parents, and staff. One or more contacts shall be selected to handle the media and update the community during a crisis. No one other than the district representative(s) should discuss IAQ-related issues with the press. The media will be alerted by [_____ name of district's media contact] when it is necessary to provide information to a broader audience. Every effort will be made to share appropriate information as soon as it becomes available to the school district.

Note: each district may want to specify the vehicles used to communicate with staff and parents.

References: modified by Lynn Rose from EPA IAQ Tools for Schools Action Kit, IAQ Coordinator's Guide, Section 3 - Model IAQ Management Plan for the PVAC "Breathing Easy" Training, July 2013