

# **Section 10**

## **Communication/Public Relations**

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## A. Purpose/Scope

The purpose of an IAQ communication/public relation policy is to ensure that accurate and timely information regarding IAQ is provided to the personnel affected and the community at large.

## B. The Process

Mounds View Schools is committed open communication and will follow the guidelines provided in the attached Public Relations document in Attachment D.

## C. Communication – A Key Element in any Indoor Air Quality Plan

Once any School District embarks on an indoor air quality management action – whether it's a preventive plan or an investigation of serious complaints – it is essential to include communications as a part of that plan.

Open, honest communication with all concerned individuals is always the best policy. It helps develop trust, alleviates fears and dispels rumors that may arise from lack of understanding. You might be tempted to ignore the communications, feeling that it's too time consuming and unnecessary. You might decide to avoid the issue unless questions arise.

Taking time to communicate up front will save time in the end. It will help educate parents and staff about indoor air quality in a positive way. The more they know and understand about what is happening in their school, the more they will support it.

The level of communication you undertake will vary greatly depending on your individual situation. If you are simply announcing the implementation of a new program to evaluate indoor air quality in your school, your approach can be quite general and low key. If, however, you have severe indoor air quality problems, you will need to communicate immediately, employing several strategies.

## D. Communicating in an Emergency

◆ **Sudden Emergency.** Consider the safety of the students and staff first. Once that has been addressed, think about how you can communicate most effectively. Your goal is to inform people about what is happening as quickly as possible and allay any fears they may have.

- Review the facts and decide what you need to communicate.
- Appoint one or more people to facilitate communication with reporters as well as parents. Make sure these people have all the facts.
- Develop key messages as soon as possible, keeping in mind the goal of allaying fears.

**School Indoor Air Quality Questions  
Web Site**

<http://www.dehs.umn.edu/iaq/school/>

- ◆ **Communicating With Parents.** The severity of the emergency will determine to a large extent how you communicate with parents. If the situation requires that the entire student body be sent home from school, obviously parents need to know as soon as possible, especially parents of elementary students. Your school should have a plan in place for handling such emergencies.

The best way to communicate with parents is through direct phone calls. That personal approach is the best way to alleviate their fears. Unfortunately, this is very time consuming. If you have large numbers of students, it may be difficult or impossible. If this is the case, you may need to use the media for assistance in broadcasting information about the emergency. "

