

# Tool Box Talk

# Air Quality

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There are several ways both indoor and outdoor air quality can affect our health. Construction, demolition, and renovation projects can introduce many contaminants into the air we breathe.

## Outdoor air quality can be affected by many factors, including:

- ✘ weather, from extreme heat and humidity to extreme cold and wind chill
- ✘ cumulated exhaust fumes from machinery
- ✘ air pollution
- ✘ pollen
- ✘ forest fires causing excess smoke

## Indoor air quality has a significantly higher number of potential hazards, including:

- ✘ chemicals
- ✘ dusts
- ✘ moulds or fungi
- ✘ bacteria
- ✘ gases, vapours, odours
- ✘ no air flow
- ✘ extremely warm or cold air
- ✘ hydrogen sulfide (H<sub>2</sub>S)
- ✘ carbon monoxide (CO)
- ✘ carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>)
- ✘ fiberglass
- ✘ asbestos
- ✘ volatile organic compounds (VOCs)
- ✘ solvents



## Investigate Potential Hazards

Assess the environment, jobsite, facilities, and materials for potential contaminants before the job begins. Continue worksite hazard awareness, identification, and control through regular worksite inspections and hazard assessments, which should include air quality assessments. If specialized air quality monitors are needed, like gas monitors or specialized individual air quality exposure assessment badges, investigate what potential hazards are posing a risk, such as a hoarded work area.

## Develop Procedures

Prepare safe work practices and specific safe job procedures for each job task. Job procedures should list potential hazards and contain specific detailed steps that list controls, engineering methods, and personal protective equipment (PPE).

## Employee Awareness

Review job procedures and practices on how to control contaminants and educate the people that will be working at the specific jobsites:

- ✘ Educate staff with awareness classes on specific subjects, like carbon monoxide (CO) monitoring.
- ✘ Utilize training resources and your safety program, and conduct regular meetings to discuss air quality.
- ✘ Appoint a staff member who takes specialized classes, such as mould remediation or indoor air quality monitoring.

## Ask the Experts

Contact experts and discuss your worksite situation:

- ✘ Speak to an industrial hygienist with Saskatchewan Occupational Health and Safety (OHS); they can help with air quality concerns.
- ✘ If you are unable to resolve concerns or you are uncertain, seek professional engineering firms, as well as mould and asbestos remediation experts.
- ✘ If additional analysis is required that is beyond the basic skills of employees, have experts conduct testing on potential hazards, like suspicious materials that may contain asbestos or moulds.

To assist workplaces in investigating and resolving common indoor air quality concerns, view the Saskatchewan Occupational Health and Safety guide on **Indoor Air Quality: Investigating Concerns**, here: [www.publications.gov.sk.ca/details.cfm?p=68984](http://www.publications.gov.sk.ca/details.cfm?p=68984)

For inspection checklists to assist employees in assessing potential hazards, visit: [www.ccohs.ca/products/publications/iaq.html](http://www.ccohs.ca/products/publications/iaq.html)



Helping Companies Achieve



REGINA | 498 HENDERSON DRIVE | REGINA SK S4N 6E3 | T: 306.525.0175 | F: 306.525.1542  
SASKATOON | 2606 KOYL AVENUE | SASKATOON SK S7L 5X9 | T: 306.652.0907 | F: 306.652.0923

WWW.SCSAONLINE.CA

