

# GLOBAL INDOOR HEALTH NETWORK

WORKING TOGETHER FOR HEALTHY INDOOR ENVIRONMENTS  
IN OUR HOMES, SCHOOLS AND BUSINESSES



February 1, 2016

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## Detroit Public Schools: How can you teach or learn in conditions like these?

*More than 60 schools in Detroit closed earlier this month after teachers called in sick in protest of mold, rodents and other dangerous conditions.*

The odious smell of mold and mildew hits you like a brick wall when you step through the front doors at Spain Elementary-Middle School in Detroit.

The gym is closed because half of the floor is buckled and the other half suffered so much rainwater damage from the dripping ceiling that it became covered with toxic black mold. Instead of professionally addressing the problem, a black tarp simply was placed over the entire area. That area of the school has been condemned.

The playground is off-limits because a geyser of searing hot steam explodes out of the ground. What do our kids do for exercise with no gym, playground or pool? They walk or run in the halls. **Seriously.** Our pre-K through eighth graders move like mall walkers.

Our complaints have fallen on deaf ears. I feel a huge void because I recognize the deficits that are created when my students, parents and colleagues are not afforded the basic necessities to perform our best.

**Every child and school employee in Detroit — for that matter, anywhere in America — deserves to be treated with respect. It is disrespectful when we bring these environmental and learning conditions to the attention of state officials (our school district is run by a governor-appointed emergency manager) and are ignored.**

Click [here](#) to read the article. Go to page 5 for additional articles about the condition of Detroit schools.

**GIHN Note:** *There has been a lot of news coverage this past month regarding the poor condition of the public schools in Detroit, Michigan. We have included numerous articles in our newsletters regarding the poor conditions in many schools throughout the country.*

According to the [U.S. EPA](#), “studies show that one-half of our nation’s schools have problems linked to indoor air quality.”

In an old 1995 report by the U.S. GAO, they gave an estimated cost of \$112 billion “to repair or upgrade America’s multi-billion-dollar investment in facilities.”

That report was published 20 years ago and very little has been done.

See *WHO sounds alarm over global pollution* page 2

## WHO Sounds Alarm Over Deadly Global Pollution

**The World Health Organisation (WHO) has warned of alarming levels of pollution in cities around the world which are killing millions of people and exacting high costs on governments.**

The Guardian newspaper has reported that new data by WHO, to be released next month, shows air pollution has worsened since 2014 in many urban centres with growing populations, and has become a global "public health emergency".

The figures reflect the state of affairs in 2,000 cities, many of which are shrouded in smog generated by construction, transport and energy production, said The Guardian.

"We have a public health emergency in many countries from pollution. It's dramatic, one of the biggest problems we are facing globally, with horrible future costs to society," said Dr. Maria Neira, head of public health at WHO under the United Nations, reported the newspaper.

**"Air pollution leads to chronic diseases which require hospital space. Before, we knew that pollution was responsible for diseases like pneumonia and asthma. Now, we know that it leads to bloodstream, heart and cardiovascular diseases, too - even dementia," said Dr. Neira.**

"We are storing up problems. These are chronic diseases that require hospital beds. The cost will be enormous."

More than three million people die from outdoor air pollution a year, with the number expected to double by 2050, scientists warn. The majority of them die from strokes and heart attacks.

Outdoor air pollution kills more people in China than anywhere else, with 1.4 million deaths annually. India is second with 645,000.

Air pollution leads to chronic diseases which require hospital space. Before, we knew that pollution was responsible for diseases like pneumonia and asthma. Now, we know that it leads to bloodstream, heart and cardiovascular diseases, too-- even dementia.

## WHO Sounds Alarm Over Deadly Global Pollution (continued)

Professor Frank Kelly, director of the environmental health research group at King's College London in Britain and a government health adviser, has described air pollution as a "global plague".

"It affects everyone, above all people in cities. As the world becomes more urbanised, it is becoming worse," he told The Guardian.

In Europe, pollution has become the single largest environmental health risk, according to a new report by the European Union's European Environment Agency (EEA).

It is responsible for more than 430,000 premature deaths.

**"It shortens people's lifespans and contributes to serious illnesses such as heart disease, respiratory problems and cancer. It also has considerable economic impact, increasing medical costs and reducing productivity," EEA director Hans Bruyninckx told The Guardian.**

British economist Nicholas Herbert Stern said that air pollution contributes to climate change significantly. "We are only just learning about the scale of the toxicity of coal and diesel," he told The Guardian.

"We know that in China, 4,000 people a day die of air pollution... This is a deep, deep problem."

Click [here](#) to read the article.

## Superkul House for a Client with Environmental Sensitivities

Chemical sensitivities are a sensitive and controversial topic; just read the comments on this post about a chemical free tiny home.

Speaking at a Canada Green Building Council Green Homes Summit today, Andre D'Elia of Toronto architectural firm Superkül described the process of designing a stunning house for a client with environmental sensitivities, and looking at the result, it is hard not to imagine that anyone would feel better and healthier in a house like this.

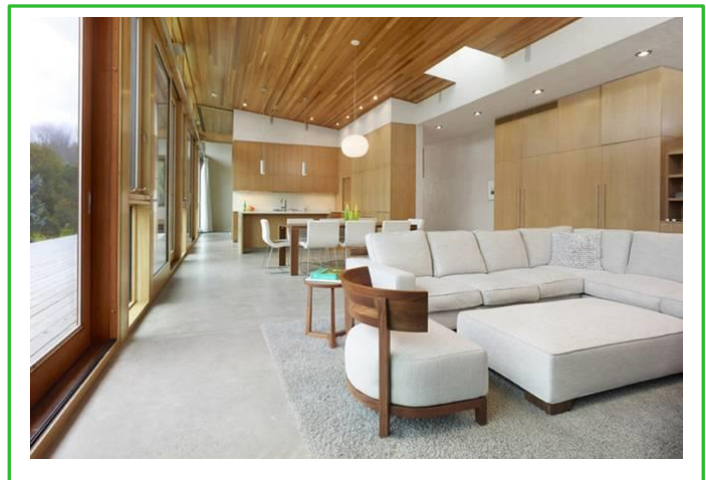
All the materials were tested to see if the client had a reaction, and natural, virgin materials fared best. Recycled materials often caused a reaction, as did many plastics. So where plastics had to be used for technical reasons, they were put on the outside of the assemblies.

**Inside there is no drywall, which seems to provoke quite a reaction; all the walls are wood or American clay plaster," 100% all-natural, is VOC-free, and is made of a proprietary blend of sand aggregates and clays sourced entirely from the United States."**

Except for a few easily accessible shelves, care was taken to eliminate horizontal surfaces where dust could collect. Structural walls are made of one of our favourite materials, Durisol," inert cementitious blocks that inhibit the growth of fungi and molds."



*Perhaps every house should be designed with environmental sensitivity in mind.*



A soy-based sealer was used for the concrete floors and counters, and untreated silk and hemp fabric was used for the curtains.

Achieving a healthy house for both client and environment meant extensive research into a wide range of products and locally produced materials suited to the climate. A green roof, heat-mirror triple glazing, solar shading, passive ventilation and daylighting, and a geothermal system are just some of the features of this LEED Gold-targeted project.

Click [here](#) to read the article.



See *Police Officer...mould lawsuit* on page 4

## Police Officer Could be Awarded Substantial Damages in Mould Lawsuit (Bermuda)

A police officer could be awarded substantial damages after he suffered chronic health problems from being exposed to toxic mould at Hamilton and Somerset police stations.

Emmerson Donald has received nearly \$500,000 in interim payments from the Bermuda Government because the Ministry of Works and Engineering has already admitted liability in the civil lawsuit.

This week, Mr. Donald took the stand at Supreme Court as Chief Justice Ian Kawaley heard arguments from both sides on how much damages the Jamaican national should be awarded in medical expenses and loss of earnings.

Mr. Donald came to Bermuda in 2000 after seven years' experience with the Jamaican police service. The court heard he was an "outstanding" officer with an exemplary record until he first **fell ill with chronic renal failure in 2003**.

In a sworn statement referred to by his lawyer, Richard Horseman, Mr. Donald said his "body and mind were broken down" and his "life was hijacked" by the illness.

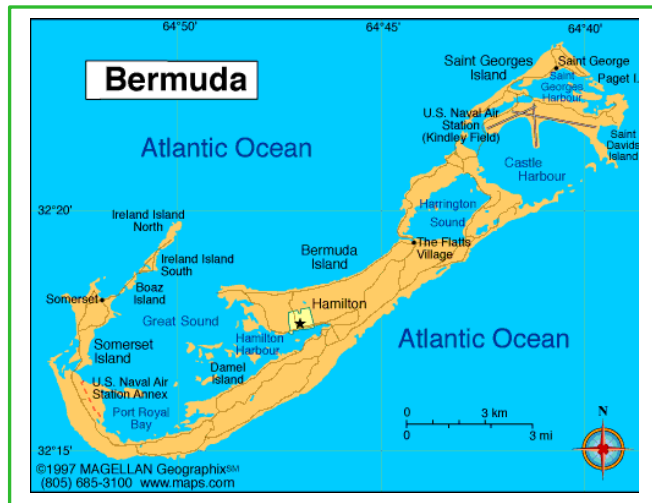
**The 44-year-old, who still undergoes dialysis three times a week for his health problems**, maintained he could have been promoted through the ranks all the way up to superintendent by 2022 had it not been for his medical condition.

The court heard that Mr. Donald had initially received \$275,000 in interim payments and then a further \$175,000, which he had kept in a trust while the case was still ongoing instead of spending it.

Mr Cooper questioned Mr Donald on this saying:

"Liability has been admitted in this case. You must know more money is coming."

Click [here](#) to read the article.



## Flint Government Lied About Lead in City Water Supply (Michigan)

A Virginia Tech professor recently discovered Michigan state officials knew the city of Flint's water supply was giving children lead poisoning while falsely assuring residents that the water was safe. Although the government had been aware of the increased levels of lead poisoning since July, they continued to lie to the public until a Flint pediatrician published a study in September that found lead exposure in children had doubled citywide and nearly tripled in high-risk areas.

Agreeing to temporarily switch from Detroit's water supply to the Flint River in April 2014, residents in the city of Flint immediately noticed their tap water appeared cloudy while emitting a pungent odor.

State officials continued telling the public that the water supply was safe until a team of researchers led by Dr. Mona Hanna-Attisha reported an alarming increase in childhood lead poisoning later that month. But on Monday, Prof. Edwards revealed that government officials had known the water supply was contaminated since July.

**Last month, the parents of these children and other Flint residents filed a class-action lawsuit against the governor and over a dozen other public officials responsible for failing an entire city.**

Click [here](#) to read the article.

See *Lead and mould in Illinois school* on page 5



## Lead and Mold found in Midland Elementary School (Illinois)

The Midland School Board will hold an emergency meeting at 5 p.m. Saturday to discuss “a possible environmental problem at Midland Elementary School and consider a plan of action.”

That’s the main agenda item for a session that follows reports the district received from a Bloomington engineering firm late Friday on recent indoor environmental testing of lead-based paint and air quality at the aging facility in central Lacon.

The most significant findings involved lead hazards, said Superintendent Rolf Sivertsen, and the district’s response appears likely to include keeping the building shuttered beyond being closed the past two days.

Sivertsen was at work Friday night on an “evacuation plan” to be considered at the meeting.

“We had one two years ago in the event the boiler went out. I am revising it,” he said by email about 8 p.m.

The building was closed Thursday and Friday as a “precautionary measure” based on concerns arising from a routine Life Safety inspection, officials said.

The entire district was dismissed because the approximately 300 students could not immediately be absorbed elsewhere.

But cleaning, painting, and other preparations at the district’s middle school in Sparland got underway Thursday in case it was necessary to move them elsewhere, Sivertsen said that night after a special board meeting on other issues.

“I don’t know if I can get them all in (Sparland) or if we’ll have to send some of them to the high school (outside Varna),” Sivertsen said at that time.

Ideal Environmental Engineering Inc. detected “lead hazards” on painted surfaces in several parts of the building, its 55-page report on that topic stated. They also were found on some exterior windows and eaves.



*Nationwide problem:*

*Lead and mold in schools*

## Lead and Mold found in Midland Elementary School (Illinois)—continued

The firm recommended either “interim control options” that would include stabilizing the paint and covering the affected areas with a special liquid coating or “abatement/replacement options” including such steps as enclosing the walls with drywall or some other material and chemically removing the paint.

“The replacement and removal options ... are more expensive initially, but do not require ongoing re-evaluation,” the report stated.

Air quality testing for possible mold hazards detected several types of mold in different areas. The total concentration of mold spores in several were “above the outdoor sample level” that is a key to testing, the 38-page report on that topic said.

Click [here](#) to read the article.

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**Read additional articles about the mold problems and poor conditions in Detroit Public Schools:**

[More than 100 photos accompany lawsuit](#)

[Mould, mushrooms, and mice are just some of the appalling conditions in Detroit public schools](#)

[More than 60 Detroit Public Schools close Monday due to teacher sick-outs](#)

[Teacher complaints of black mold in Detroit schools attract concern](#)

[Detroit teachers weigh possibility of more sick-outs](#)

See *Mold in Basement* on page 6

## Woman Discovers Mold in Basement after Home Purchase (Tennessee)

A couple weeks after Brenda Goode moved into her home she started feeling sick.

“Severe sinus headache, pressure, coughing and a scratchy sore throat, and this is every day,” said Goode.

Many older homes in East Tennessee were built with basements and were generally used as a utility space. Goode recently bought a 70-year-old home with a cellar believing it was trouble free. However, she said big problems in the basement were discovered.

The tidy looking three-bedroom rancher built in 1945 has a basement where she can park her car. There’s also a crawl space in the cellar that is half filled with dirt.

When she was first taken into the house, Goode said she asked the realtor what the smell was. The realtor said the place just needed to be aired out.

“I was told it was where the house had been closed for a period of time,” said Goode. She temporarily left the house on the advice of her doctor, because after living there a few weeks, she started feeling ill.

According to Goode, the basement made her sick. She said she didn’t go into the cellar before buying the house, but says she neither saw nor was made aware of mold in the crawl space until after moving in.

“It was heartbreaking because remediation is going to be every expensive,” said Goode. She believes mold throughout the cellar floor is creating her health problems.

Goode hired certified mold specialist Gene Walshaw to check her basement. He used this special electronic device to capture air samples. The mold count was alarming.

Now the Department of Housing and Urban Development has gotten involved. HUD says it is reviewing Goode’s case in an effort to resolve the matter.

## Woman Discovers Mold in Basement after Home Purchase (continued)

“There was a high count of some molds that are hazardous to human health,” said Walshaw.

The results of his test showed 25,826 per cubic meter.

“The types of mold that we found here can cause pneumonia, irritation to the respiratory system, throat and nose,” said Walshaw.

On the other side of the basement, Walshaw found bare soil without a plastic cover over it. He says that allows moisture to fill the basement creating mold. He also found water leaking onto the basement floor. He says the water is getting trapped by a three sided retaining wall outside the house right next to the basement.

Water that gets in here can’t get out. So it just builds up soaks into the ground and goes through the foundation into the basement and crawl space,” he said.

In a FHA disclosure statement, the previous owner was asked if he aware of mold in the property? The answer was no.

**Now the Department of Housing and Urban Development has gotten involved. HUD says it is reviewing Goode’s case in an effort to resolve the matter.**

Click [here](#) to read the article.

See *Impact of fragrances* on page 7

## Scents and Sensitivity: The Impact of Fragrances (Allergies & Chemical Sensitivity)

Signature scents are in vogue and perfume is a popular duty-free item, but some passengers find fragrances more irritating than pleasant. For some, fragrances may trigger “protective throat closure, burning eyes and nose, or headaches.”

A recent study on fragrance sensitivity in the American population determined:

- 5 percent found scented products on others irritating
- 19 percent reported adverse health effects from air fresheners
- 9 percent reported irritation from scented laundry products that were vented outside

**The percentages were higher for individuals suffering from asthma and chemical sensitivity.**

In 2010, the City of Detroit changed its employee handbook to discourage the use of perfumes, deodorants and cologne, after a complaint made by a city employee who suffered from chemical sensitivity.

**But, in North America, Canada has taken the lead on policy. Halifax is considered the “most scent-aware region” in North America. The Regional Municipality of Halifax, the provincial government, businesses, public transport and a number of public places and institutions have adopted voluntary scent-awareness policies. The University of Calgary, University of Toronto and McMaster University have established similar policies on their campuses.**

Vancouver International Airport recently joined the effort by establishing a safe zone for passengers traveling through its duty-free shops.

“We want our passengers to have the best experience possible while at YVR and felt this was important to offer for people who may have fragrance allergies or sensitivities,” says Tess Messmer, communications specialist for the Vancouver Airport Authority.

Click [here](#) to read the article.



## New Lawsuit Targets California Board of Equalization

*GIHN note: We are continuing to cover this situation regarding the California Board of Equalization building. Here's the latest update:*

**A dozen state workers are suing the Board of Equalization alleging that agency leaders for years have known its 24-story headquarters is a health hazard but continue to tell employees that the building is perfectly safe.**

Sacramento attorney Anthony Perez is seeking class-action status for the case and an unspecified sum of money for his clients.

Perez says state officials “are talking out of both sides of their mouths” by stating the facility is safe while at the same time issuing a media resource website in October that says the tower needs “\$40 million for repairs and mediation” plus twice as much to relocate operations during the extensive repairs.

“While they go (to the Legislature) and ask for funding, they tell their employees the building is safe,” Perez said in a telephone interview.

**The lawsuit claims that officials knew two years after the building's 1993 opening that water was leaking into the structure, which fostered toxic mold growth.**

Click [here](#) to read the article.

See *Gov. Hogan questions superintendent* on page 8

## Governor Hogan Questions Howard County Schools Superintendent about Mold Issues (Maryland)

The mold controversy in Howard County public schools has reached the state's highest office.

At a meeting of the state Board of Public Works Wednesday, Governor Larry Hogan said that he and the other members of the board — Comptroller Franchot and Treasurer Nancy Kopp — had received many "letters of concern" from parents, a school board member and state Del. Warren Miller about maintenance and mold issues in Howard County's public schools. Hogan and Franchot questioned Superintendent Renee Foose extensively about these concerns.

**"The most egregious instance is Glenwood Middle School in western Howard County," he said. "Several Glenwood students and teachers became very ill and required hospitalization. News reports revealed that the school system's officials knew about these mold issues in the school but did not inform parents or school community until much later."**

"There's a palpable loss of trust between many parents and the county school system," Hogan said, "and in particular with the superintendent."

**"So when several students and teachers were hospitalized for being ill, you think it was their imagination?" Comptroller Franchot asked. "You never had a mold problem?"**

Foose said that she didn't think it was imagination.

"But you didn't have a problem?" Franchot continued.

When staff returned to Glenwood Middle last Thursday, two staff members were taken by ambulance to the Carroll County Hospital after they experienced dizziness.

**Next Newsletter: March 1, 2016**



## Governor Hogan Questions Howard County Schools Superintendent about

Before the superintendent took the podium, Delegate Miller told Hogan that the mold issue goes back to the poor condition of school roofs and, more broadly, the school system's failure to maintain school facilities.

"We all know that the age of the school isn't the concern. It's the way it's maintained," said the Republican representing District 9A. "When I was a kid, my elementary school was a 100-year-old school, and it was fine because it had been well-maintained."

"Anything you can do to supervise public dollars for these schools and make sure the money's being spent correctly would be much appreciated," he continued.

"We'd like you to stay on top of this issue and report back to us on any additional mold issues that you discover and any ongoing maintenance steps you're taking to address the problem," he said.

Click [here](#) to read the article.

### Quick Links:

**Website:** <http://globalindoorhealthnetwork.com>

**Health Effects:**  
<http://www.globalindoorhealthnetwork.com/health-effects>

**Position Statement:**  
<http://www.globalindoorhealthnetwork.com/GIHN-position-statement>