

GLOBAL INDOOR HEALTH NETWORK

"WORKING TOGETHER FOR HEALTHY INDOOR ENVIRONMENTS"

<http://globalindoorhealthnetwork.com>

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Radon is the Second Leading Cause of Lung Cancer

Many know of someone who died of lung cancer but never smoked, and it seems to be a more common diagnosis each year. What's behind it? Though second-hand smoke is certainly a culprit, the second leading cause of lung cancer after smoking is something that may be lurking in your own home--radon.

Radon is a radioactive gas that seeps up from the earth from the soil and rock.

"You breathe it in, and the radioactive element breaks down. It can actually damage the DNA inside of your lungs. When that DNA tries to repair itself, it can actually lead to mutation and uncontrolled growth -- lung cancer."

To read the entire article:

[Radon Radiation](#)

Workers at Alaska Labor Department Continue to Report Health Issues

Over the last five years, multiple health complaints from employees at the Department of Labor & Workforce Development building (in Juneau, Alaska), nicknamed the Plywood Palace, have spurred mitigation efforts. Despite re-wrapping the 300-person building to mold removal, doctor visits, medications and employee relocation, some long-term workers are tired of feeling ill and are looking for a new place to work.

A group of about 50 Labor Department employees meet with union representatives from the Alaska State Employees Association and Alaska Public Employees Association on Feb. 1 to discuss mold remediation efforts that took place in December 2011 and ongoing issues in the building, according to a letter written by DOL Employee Jade Bickmore.

Now wrapped in a 5-year-old aluminum façade, the Plywood Palace has had several updates and repairs made in recent years to deal with leaks, glacial silt and mold.

Some employees say the state's and landlord's efforts have failed to remedy their health problems which, they say, are caused by the building. Symptoms include red itchy eyes, tightness in the throat, difficulty breathing, headaches, confusion, memory loss, swollen glands, sinus infection, burning throat, chest pressure and others.

The building has leaks and that the vapor barrier is breached in areas.

"The lack of a continuous vapor retarder and missing cavity insulation could lead to condensation and potential organic growth within the wall cavity," the Wiss Janney report states.

[Workers at Alaska Labor Department Continue to Report Health Issues](#)

See *Nineteen Courthouse Employees Sue* on page 2

Nineteen Courthouse Employees Sue Broward County over Sick Building

Nineteen current and former employees of the Broward County Courthouse have sued the county, arguing the building is "sick" and so are they.

The employees say the county's courthouse in downtown Fort Lauderdale is infested with toxic mold and that tiny asbestos fibers float through the air, exposing the public and the employees to health dangers. They want financial compensation for their illnesses, and they want the courthouse evacuated, among other requests.

"I think the county totally neglected this courthouse," said attorney and former state Sen. Skip Campbell, whose firm is handling the cases. "They are not doing their job."

Though Broward County commissioners acknowledged the 50-year-old building's troubles and agreed two years ago to build a new \$328 million courthouse and parking complex, the lawsuits continue to mount. Campbell said he's still talking to potential clients who fell ill and blame the building.

He's seeking damages, but also wants Broward forced to medically monitor his clients for future illnesses, a request he said could cost the county "millions of dollars," depending on how many people sue.

"I was a politician for 10 years. I know what politics is all about," Campbell said. "This case is about peoples' health."

In court documents, the county denies the presence of floating asbestos fibers and toxic mold, and argues that the state's sovereign immunity law protects government from hefty damages. The county also rejects the idea that it was negligent in failing to test for the threats and not warning employees properly.

In the lawsuits, which are the same in content except for employee names, the woes are traced to water intrusion from the 2005 hurricanes Katrina and Wilma, and the cleanup.



Nineteen Courthouse Employees Sue Broward County over Sick Building (cont'd)

Mold or flooding problems are dealt with as they come up, he said.

And they continue to come up.

The ninth floor — site of the courtroom for Circuit Judge Cheryl Aleman, who died a year ago of an aggressive form of lung cancer — was stripped to bare concrete, the ceiling tiles ripped out. It reopens soon. Judge Mel Grossman's office was flooded a few months ago and had to be completely redone, for example.

The safety of the building, and the county's poor job maintaining it, were openly discussed at a public hearing two years ago when commissioners voted for the project, devoting sales tax to it.

People are afraid to go in there," attorney Howard Pomerantz said at that hearing. "I can't imagine how people who are considering becoming judges in the future feel, putting their health at issue coming in to this building."

[19 Broward Courthouse Employees Sue Broward Saying Building Made Them Ill](#)

To read previous stories about environmental problems at the Broward County Courthouse:

[Judges Move to New Chambers, Request Mold and Asbestos Testing at Courthouse](#) (Jan. 10, 2011)

[Lawsuit Filed to Shutdown Courthouse](#) (Feb. 2, 2011)

See *Jessica Alba and The Honest Company* on page 3

Jessica Alba and The Honest Company

Working mom Jessica Alba is adding entrepreneur to her many titles, shifting from movie star to businesswoman with a venture that provides parents easy access to eco-friendly natural products for babies and homes.

Alba, who wed husband Cash Warren in 2008, has taken motherhood to heart, and mind, focusing on being a hands-on parent to her two daughters, 4-year-old Honor and newborn Haven. While preparing for motherhood four years ago, the 30-year-old actress found her biggest challenge, was trying to find eco-friendly natural products for her baby and her home.

"There are a lot of toxic chemicals in baby products, and these toxic chemicals are linked to not just allergies and asthma, but also autism and ADHD and lots of childhood cancers, and I was horrified that products that were made for babies and children would have these toxic chemicals," said the actress.

Alba founded The Honest Company along with Christopher Gavigan, former CEO of non-profit group Healthy Child Healthy World, after discovering that toxic chemicals were often disguised as "fragrances" on product labels and finding that not all eco-friendly and natural products worked efficiently.

Together, they came up with an online business model to launch an eco-friendly range of baby and household products, tried and tested by themselves and their own babies. They are toxin-free and aesthetically pleasing, and can be delivered straight to your door.

The actress took her fight against toxic products to Washington D.C. in May 2011 while pregnant with her second child to lobby on behalf of the Safer Chemicals, Healthy Families coalition that supported the Safe Chemicals Act.

"Even government officials aren't aware that chemical companies don't have to test their chemicals before they sell them to product companies. They can just put them in there, and we are the guinea pigs," said the actress.

[Jessica Alba and The Honest Company](#)

[The Honest Company website](#)



Jessica Alba and The Honest Company

Indoor Air Pollutants Rank among the Top 5 Environmental Risks for Public Health

Did you know that indoor levels of air pollutants could be 2-5 times higher, and occasionally 100 times higher, than outdoor levels? In fact, indoor air pollution consistently ranks among the top five environmental risks to public health according to the EPA Indoor Environments Division. Most of us tend to think of dust, pet dander, and smoke as the main culprits, however some other common, but little known indoor pollutants include Formaldehyde, Lead, Radon, Nitrogen Dioxide and Carbon Monoxide. These toxic substances and others can be found in a wide range of household items from building materials, to furniture, linens, and even cookware.

It is important to reduce exposure to common household chemical solvents contained in items such as commercial cleaning products, pesticides, and other household products. Below are some tips to keep indoor pollution to a minimum so everyone can breathe easier.

- Use Natural Cleaners & Pest Control to remove solvents and chemicals from the home. There are many easy to prepare natural cleaners and insect repellants that work very well and drastically reduce indoor pollution.
- Remove carpet and enjoy natural wood flooring or tile, which are easier to keep clean.
- Don't leave vehicles running inside attached garages.
- Seek out non-toxic paints, carpets and drapery items when remodeling/redecorating the home.
- Indoor air filtering machines with HEPA filters in sleeping areas are also beneficial

To read the entire article:

[Designing a Healthy Home for Asthma Sufferers](#)

Member Profile: Karen Raymer

It is an honor to join the Global Indoor Health Network. To be able to share, learn and support others in this quest for hope amidst the struggles is truly a blessing!

Years ago, an encounter with a man at the end of our family driveway remains a moment not forgotten. Before this encounter, my husband and I thought we had purchased our "dream home"; newly built, brand new neighborhood, amenities and all that was visible to our eyes seemed "perfect". There were details during the process of that home purchase that now are recognized as "red flags", but we honestly believed we had done all the homework for this milestone investment for our family.

When we moved into that home, I experienced chronic health issues that had never existed in the past...respiratory, lymphatic distress, kidney function, "allergies" to foods that I'd never reacted to in the past, skin rashes/hives, female issues, fogginess... many struggles. Then, a chance encounter with a man taking water samples at the end of our driveway led to a season of research, studying public records and learning more about the process for the built environment than I ever would have imagined! Our home was built on land that was environmentally contaminated and was under remediation when we purchased it. This remediation/cleanup process was being monitored while we lived there, and two monitoring wells for this process also existed on our property--all unbeknownst to us. After asking the man taking the water samples a few questions, changes began that affected family life, work life and community activism and involvement.

Since that situation, life has remained a learning curve: for serving others, working in collaboration while supporting a movement for faithfully seeking truth, for honesty, integrity, ethics and stewardship. These attributes seem to be less and less "visible" within the culture of today.

Twenty+ years ago, my career path began in the high end residential interior design trade. The goal for many years in this trade was focused only on visibly pleasing results for clients. Experiencing that season of health struggles shifted my heart for a different focus: the relationship of our living environments and health impact.



Raymer family

Member Profile: Karen Raymer (continued)

Studying land development, building science, the relationship of indoor air quality and health triggers, ingredients used in building materials and interiors (furnishings, fabrics) as well as how these materials are manufactured, nutrition/organic food/food sources, cosmetics, toxicities of synthetic and natural ingredients in products...created a passion within me to work with others with shared hopes.

I am currently working in the Southeast on projects being designed to educate and assist folks who are medically fragile, are struggling with chemical sensitivities or have been affected by natural disasters. I am also working in collaboration within the non-profit sector for organizations that are focused on healthy housing, organic gardening, locally manufactured healthy/safe furnishings and products for the home as well as anti-human trafficking/modern day slavery initiatives.

In 2006, my husband and I opened a store that we were told was "ahead of the time" for the Atlanta area. We sadly closed in 2009. This store was designed to address and serve the medically fragile/chemically sensitive/allergic with products that were researched, tested, understood and 90% Made in America and/or Local... the 10% of product that was made in another country was researched thoroughly for manufacturing ingredients as well as labor conditions involved. Thankfully, we have come to realize that this leap of faith wasn't a mistake. We could have never predicted what would transpire with the growing numbers for cases regarding indoor air quality health impact in the last few years. We hope to continue to best serve others however we are able. Every day we wake up, we give thanks. We are grateful for GIHN.

See *Students Advocate for Safe Housing Bill* on page 5

West Virginia University Students Advocate for Safe Housing Bill

More than 30 West Virginia University students traveled to the Capitol Tuesday to push a statewide bill that would protect tenants who face issues with mold growing in their homes. Members of the WVU Student Government Association and Student Advocates for Legislative Advancement are advocating for House Bill 4425, which would regulate what rights tenants have when mold makes residencies uninhabitable.

"Students can get sick and have to move out of their homes, but still have to pay rent because nothing is holding landlords liable," said SGA Off-Campus Housing Director Earl Hewitt. "The bill encompasses a lot about mold and its effects on residential housing, which has been one of the biggest issues on campus in the past few years."

Members of SGA and SALA will present HB 4425, which has been sitting at the Judiciary Committee since Feb. 6, to more than 50 state legislators today, said SALA Democratic Chair Chris Nyden.

"Mold is not only a big problem for students looking for off-campus housing in Morgantown, but for residents all over the state who are dealing with these issues in their homes, businesses and churches," he said. "We've been working hard to press this issue, and we're going to keep working."

The bill would require landlords to offer equivalent housing up to 10 days for tenants who suffer medical conditions due to inhalation of mold or force them to renegotiate the lease agreement.

Tenants would be required to report mold within 24 hours of discovering a problem, and any residence containing more than nine square feet of mold would have to be professionally cleaned at the expense of the landlord, according to the bill, Nyden said.

"Just because it doesn't look bad doesn't mean you're safe. Sometimes it's hard to recognize because it's been painted over," Key said.

[Student Orgs Advocate for Safe Housing Bill](#)



*West Virginia University
Morgantown, West Virginia*

Mold Forces Police Department to Leave Headquarters

The Tonganoxie (Kansas) Police Department have been forced out of their headquarters.

During a City Council meeting Tuesday night, city officials reached an agreement to allow the police department to temporarily lease a building across the street due to a pressing mold issue in the police headquarters.

Because of a reoccurring mold problem, police officers had to previously move their phones, radios and CPUs, to the City Council chambers and to City Council offices next door.

The second move could happen early as next week.

"This situation has gone on for the last several years," Tonganoxie Mayor Jason Ward said. "We have an old foundation."

Ward added that in the past, they've been able to remove the mold from the nearly 100-year-old police building. He said that the issue has become a persistent problem due to moisture.

Once we receive information from the environmental company, we will determine the problem as it exists and then the council will be informed," Ward said.

[Mold Forces Police Department to Leave Headquarters](#)

See *Mold Chases Family from their home* on page 6

Mold Chases Denver Family from their Home after Clean-up Job

A northeast Denver family is fighting for a healthy home. They had a mold clean-up job done in December, but say the mold still exists.

The family contacted 4 On Your Side Consumer Investigator Jodi Brooks for help. She organized different mold tests. CBS4's test results confirm high levels of mold still in the home.

A bathroom tested high, and so did the master bedroom. CBS4's test results now have the attention of the people in charge of the remediation project.

"It's just crazy. It needs to end," homeowner Dontrael Starks said.

"There's still mold. There's still a bunch of mold in here," homeowner Tiffany Jones said.

Jones and Starks have three children — twins Aadyan and Honor, who turn 3 years old in March; and little Zaryia, who will turn 2 years old also in March. Jones and all of the children suffer from asthma, and Aadyan also has autism. So for the family, a healthy home is paramount.

"I couldn't image someone else's family going through this and being this patient for all this time," Starks said.

For more than 80 days now the family has been living in temporary housing, refusing to move back into their home.

"It upsets me because I just feel like nobody cares. I just feel like they don't care; like honestly do not care about our family," Starks said.

[Mold Chases Denver Family from their Home after Clean-up Job](#)



Denver family battling mold problems

CDC Data Shows Workers Exposed to Asbestos May Qualify for a Lawsuit

Data released by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has shown that despite federal restrictions on the commercial use of asbestos, workers who were exposed to asbestos-containing products on the job decades ago may still be at risk of being diagnosed with mesothelioma or other asbestos-related diseases. Workers who were exposed to asbestos on the job and have developed mesothelioma, lung cancer or other illnesses that they may be eligible to file a lawsuit based on their injuries.

Asbestos is a cancer-causing material that was commonly used for commercial, industrial and construction purposes before being restricted in the U.S. during the 1970s. However, because workers may take as many as 50 years after exposure to develop symptoms of an asbestos disease, many workers who worked with asbestos on the job are only now showing signs of mesothelioma, asbestosis, lung cancer or other conditions.

[CDC Data Shows Workers Exposed to Asbestos on the Job May Qualify for a Lawsuit](#)

Quick Links:

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[Next Newsletter: Friday, March 9, 2012](#)

Working Together for Healthy Indoor Environments