

GLOBAL INDOOR HEALTH NETWORK

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



March 12, 2019

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Mold and other environmental problems in military housing are currently being discussed by Congress. See our coverage of this topic on pages 5-9.

What about mold in schools, workplaces and non-military housing? Will they ever admit or address the full scope of the problem?

Around the World, a Worker Dies from Toxic Exposure in Their Workplace Every 30 Seconds

In the last 30 days, the US Occupational Safety and Health Authority cited a pet food company in Florida for failing to provide protective gear for workers handling corrosive chemicals, a Pennsylvania hair salon for exposing workers to hazardous materials, an Ohio musical instrument factory for exposing workers to toxic copper dust, and a Texas indoor gun range for exposing workers to unsafe levels of lead.

Citations like that happen regularly, year-round, highlighting that even in a country with extensive worker safety rules, going to work is still a hazard for many.

In fact, it is often deadly: Around the world, a worker dies from toxic exposure in their workplace every 30 seconds, according to a [2018 UN report](#) published in September by Baskut Tuncak, the United Nations special rapporteur on toxics. Every 15 seconds, a worker dies from dangerous working conditions in general.

In total, around 2.8 million workers globally die from unsafe or unhealthy work conditions per year, according to the report. And diseases resulting from workplaces—like lung cancer linked to inhaling carcinogenic substances on the job—account for around 86% of all premature death.

"In my view, much of what I describe in the report is criminal conduct," Tuncak said in his address to the Human Rights Council in September.

Cancer is by far the biggest contributor to those deaths, making up roughly 70% of workplace diseases. "Almost all such cancers can be prevented," the report reads.

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See *Workers die from toxic exposures* on page 2

Around the World, a Worker Dies from Toxic Exposure in Their Workplace Every 30 Seconds (cont'd)

“More than 200 different known factors, including toxic chemicals and radiation, have been identified to date as known or probable human carcinogens, and workers are exposed to many of these in the course of their jobs,” the UN report reads. “Debilitating and fatal lung diseases, neurological disabilities, and reproductive impairments such as infertility and inability to carry a pregnancy to term are among various other health impacts that plague workers exposed to toxic substances.”

Tuncak highlighted Samsung factory workers in Korea exposed to toxic chemicals on the job: Hwang Yumi, a 23-year-old Samsung employee, died of leukemia in 2007 after working for the company for five years, Tuncak said, “where she was likely exposed to toxic substances every day without meaningful consent.” He writes:

The Special Rapporteur heard testimony from former Samsung workers (all women) and their family members about tasks performed in the manufacture of semiconductor chips, such as dipping semiconductors into a chemical solution by hand to remove unnecessary parts and manually sorting and testing chips under high temperatures or voltages, releasing fumes.

Samsung recently agreed to arbitration for Yumi’s case and more than 100 other workers who suffered from diseases, disabilities, and premature death linked to their Korean operations, the Tuncak reports. (Days before the UN report was released, in September 2018, a worker died of CO2 poisoning at the same Samsung plant.)

Samsung is only one company; the UN has collected reports from hundreds of other former electronics industry workers from different companies who alleged having developed cancer, anaemia, “reproductive abnormalities,” and other health impacts related to working with industrial chemicals.

The diseases and disabilities that result from exposure to toxic substances are cruel,” Tuncak said. “The particularly heinous nature of this exploitation is that there are almost always alternatives to prevent or minimize exposure. Solutions to this abuse of workers’ rights are available, should States choose to compel businesses to adopt them.” To read the article, click [here](#).

More than 200 different known factors, including toxic chemicals and radiation, have been identified to date as known or probable human carcinogens, and workers are exposed to many of these in the course of their jobs.

Cancer is by far the biggest contributor to those deaths, making up roughly 70% of workplace diseases.

Almost all such cancers can be prevented.

Dozens of Nurses, Staffers on NYC Hospital Maternity Floor Being Sickened by Mold (New York)

More than 50 nurses and staffers on a New York City hospital's maternity floor have reported getting sick from an odor that tests confirmed to be related to mold, authorities say.

Staten Island University Hospital said in a statement Monday the odor was first reported on its maternity floor at the north site in the fall.

Newborns were moved to a backup nursery while environmental tests were conducted -- and those found mold at moderately elevated levels, "similar to those detected outdoors." Water-borne mold was also found behind a sink wall.

A total of 53 employees reported symptoms--ones ranging from dizziness to headaches and sore throats--they attributed to the mold conditions.

The hospital says: "Our main focus has been to properly mitigate the nursery area to continue providing care in the safest environment possible for our patients and staff."

An employee, Robyn Jacobs, still expressed concern.

"They keep telling us it's safe, it's safe, it's safe," she told the News. "How safe is it? Because we're all getting sick."

To read the article, click [here](#).

South Carolina School Districts Have Had Thousands of Work Orders Relating to Mold

A Live 5 News investigation shows teachers, principals, and school officials are sending in hundreds of work orders a year to district officials requesting help to clean up the mold in their school.

The Berkeley County School District and the Charleston County School District had thousands of work orders relating to mold over the last several years.

Several schools show repeated claims. Not all these claims were substantiated, but many of them were.

A CCSD teacher wrote to maintenance, "Evidence of mold in the child development classes. Had an asthma attack after being in the room two minutes. We have several work orders regarding air quality in the building. Several people are getting sick with symptoms of headaches, earaches, breathing issues, chest pains, and itchy eyes."

Dorchester District 2 had fewer requests for mold cleanup over the last few years, but several teachers did write into maintenance alleging their breathing and health was compromised because of mold.

"My room needs to be checked for mold," a DD2 teacher wrote in a work order. "On three sperate days, I had to clean mold from the desks and chairs in my room and each day the rag was black."

The complaints going to district officials come from people who all believe the problem is mold hiding behind classroom walls.

Thousands of orders show complaints for mold growing on books, desks, walls, the floor, and in cabinets.

"We aren't solving the problem and if we're not going to invest in our institutional structures that the state owns, because we are liable for people's health and well-being, then we need to tackle this issue."

To read the article, click [here](#).

Thousands of work orders show complaints for mold growing on books, desks, walls, the floor, and in cabinets.

Sullivan North Schools, Mold and a Lawsuit (Tennessee)

Records obtained through a Freedom of Information Act request reveal that Sullivan County Schools have tested for mold in three different school buildings within the past two years - four tests at Sullivan North High School, one test at Indian Springs Elementary and one test at Holston Elementary School.

Tests at Holston (on Dec. 18, 2018) and Indian Springs Elementary (Jan. 31, 2019) came back negative for *Stachybotrys*, or "black mold." The four tests at Sullivan North High and Middle Schools are at the center of a \$21 million lawsuit against the Sullivan County Department of Education.

Former Sullivan North teacher Michael Upchurch filed a lawsuit last month, seeking \$18 million in punitive damages and \$3 million in compensatory damages. The suit follows his resignation from the school due to prolonged health issues he says were caused by "black mold" he said he found at the school while he was working there.

Upchurch maintains throughout his lawsuit that air quality tests are not an accurate way to detect the presence of "black mold." Wingfield Environmental, the laboratory that conducted the sampling for the school, states in its report that "unidentified microbial growth may be located within walls, ceilings, cavities, below flooring or grade and other non-accessible areas that were not identified by current sampling efforts."

Upchurch said he took a tile from the school to a laboratory in South Carolina for testing, and that sample came back positive for mold. To read this article, click [here](#).

GIHN Note: Air Quality tests are not sufficient to determine if a building is contaminated.

See *Mold problems in Virginia schools* on page 4

Record Rain Leads to Mold Problem in Virginia Schools (Virginia)

Virginia's record rainfall has caused quite a messy problem for schools – mold.

That has led to health issues for some students who had no idea the buildings where they were spending their day were causing them to get sick.

One such student was Aurora Malden, a student in Price George County.

Brittany Malden is a mother of four. Two go to Walton Elementary, but only Aurora kept getting sick, including a trip to the hospital.

"She started having symptoms way back last year in April, I think," Malden said. "She started having these cough attacks."

Even after months of antibiotics and steroid treatments, and an ambulance ride to VCU Medical Center, doctors could not determine what was wrong.

Eventually, Malden wondered if an allergic reaction to mold could be causing the problem. It was cases like that, Superintendent Renee Williams said, that led to the school being shut down and thoroughly cleaned.

"Initially we identified several classrooms," Williams said. "The school board made the decision to test the whole school."

Mold was found in six rooms, five of which were classrooms. Prince George is not alone. At least six Virginia schools and colleges have publicly dealt with mold since September. Richmond Public Schools is among them, and **Superintendent Jason Kamras called the problem criminal in his State of the Schools address.**

Of Virginia's 2,000-plus public schools, 40 percent are more than 50 years old. The state does not have a law requiring older schools to be tested. Teachers and parents generally have to sound the alarm for a test to be initiated.

To read the article, click [here](#).



Texas Dept of Licensing and Regulation Proposes Criminal Conviction Guidelines for Mold Assessors and Remediators

The Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation (TDLR) invites you to participate in a forum to assist us in developing certain policy documents that are used by the Enforcement Division. In many TDLR programs an advisory board provides guidance in this process. However, because there is no advisory board for Mold Assessors and Remediators we are seeking the input and advice of interested individuals in your industry.

At this forum we will develop a draft of Criminal Conviction Guidelines for your industry. The Criminal Conviction Guidelines provide potential applicants and licensees with a general description of convictions that may result in the denial or revocation of a license. The purpose of your input on these guidelines is to assist TDLR in (1) identifying the crimes that should be considered when a criminal background check is conducted and (2) explaining why each crime is related to the practice of licensees in Mold.

To view the Criminal Conviction Guidelines for all TDLR programs please visit our website at <https://www.tdlr.texas.gov/crimconvict.htm>.

The forum will be held on Tuesday, April 9, 2019, at 9:00 a.m. in the 1st floor public meeting room at TDLR's North Campus, located at 1106 Clayton Lane, Austin, Texas. Directions.

To ensure adequate seating is available, we request that you RSVP by email to Dustin.Exner@tdlr.texas.gov. If you have any questions or for additional information, please contact Dustin Exner at 512-334-5524.

See *Lawmakers blast companies* on page 5

Lawmakers Blast Companies Overseeing Military Homes Racked by Toxic Dangers

Military families described living in decrepit, dangerous and inescapable homes at a Wednesday hearing, where lawmakers expressed shock over the allegations of slum-like conditions of privately managed housing.

The emotional testimonies came on the same day as the release of a survey that painted a grim picture of living conditions at U.S. bases for thousands of families, including black mold, lead, infestations of vermin, flooding, radon and faulty wiring.

Families said their concerns have been met with resistance, and in some cases threats from property management companies and commanders to silence them.

Crystal Cornwall, a Marine Corps spouse, told lawmakers about termites falling through light fixtures at an air base in Mississippi and mice chewing through infant pacifiers at Camp Lejeune, N.C.

"I wouldn't recommend my own children join the service, and my husband has been a Marine for 12 years," she said.

Some families said their children have been sickened by toxic living conditions but felt they had few options to hold companies or commanders accountable.

Sen. Martha McSally (R-Ariz.), a former Air Force pilot, described the stories as "disgusting" and infuriating.

"They left you hanging. They put you in harm's way," McSally told a panel of three military spouses, describing the companies. "Somehow, we need the chain of command to be able to poke their finger in the chest of these companies to say fix it now, or you're done."

Sen. Tim Kaine said he was left baffled during opening remarks in the Senate Armed Services subcommittee hearing. "It gets harder and harder to shock me," he said. "This is shocking."

Military families described living in decrepit, dangerous and inescapable homes, where lawmakers expressed shock over the allegations of slum-like conditions of privately managed housing (even though these problems have been occurring for decades).

Lawmakers Blast Companies Overseeing Military Homes Racked by Toxic Dangers (cont'd)

The panel of military spouses told lawmakers they would like options to hold companies to account, like withholding housing stipend payments until work orders were complete and satisfactory. In a surprising move, the panel of executives told lawmakers they would have few problems with that idea.

In a joint statement, Army Secretary Mark T. Esper and Army Chief of Staff Gen. Mark A. Milley said they were "deeply troubled" by reports of unsafe housing.

"We will hold our chain of command and private contractors accountable to ensure they are meeting their obligations to provide safe, high-quality family housing," they said.

Robert H. McMahon, the Defense Department's assistant secretary of defense for sustainment, said the partnership between companies and the military was important to meet the housing needs of families but acknowledged widespread problems.

"This is a failure of leadership on both sides," he told lawmakers.

The Military Family Advisory Network conducted a survey of families after a 2018 Reuters investigation sparked congressional inquiries. In the seven days it was available, the organization said the survey received more than 16,000 respondents eager to express simmering frustrations.

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See *Lawmakers blast companies* on page 6

Lawmakers Blast Companies Overseeing Military Homes Racked by Toxic Dangers (cont'd)

Continued from page 5...

More than half of the respondents, 56 percent, reported a “negative” or “very negative” opinion of their living conditions, which the group concluded showed a “systemic problem” that defies location, rank and branch of service.

“No one should be worried about their safety in their own home,” said Shannon Raszadin, the executive director of the Military Family Advisory Network.

Health concerns and repairs have become “all-consuming” for many families, she told The Washington Post, diverting their focus from military duties and upcoming deployments.

In 1996, the Pentagon reported to Congress that federally run housing was so badly neglected that it posed the risk of “collapsing the force.” Privatization began the same year under the Military Housing Privatization Initiative, created specifically to address poor living conditions and the shortage of “quality affordable private housing.”

Contractors moved in to absorb reconstruction costs in exchange for the steady flow of income from 50-year leases.

Since then, 99 percent of on-base housing has been privatized. But families were not as happy as shareholders; a 2015 Pentagon inspector general report found “pervasive” health and safety hazards at military homes operated by such companies, and the I.G. blamed poor maintenance and oversight.

About 15 private real estate companies partner with the Army, Air Force and Navy to manage about 200,000 units, a Reuters investigation found, but the Pentagon has not said how much of housing stipends paid to troops flow to the companies as rent payments. Reuters estimated it was \$3.9 billion in 2018 alone.

In 1996, the Pentagon reported to Congress that federally run housing was so badly neglected that it posed the risk of “collapsing the force.”

Privatization began the same year.

Lawmakers Blast Companies Overseeing Military Homes Racked by Toxic Dangers (cont'd)

Some of these companies advertise high-quality homes at safe bases, unbeatable commute times and positive customer ratings, with photos of happy families splashed across websites.

Amie Norquist with her children. (Amie Norquist) None of them showed the toxic mold blooms that stratified in Amie Norquist’s home at MacDill Air Force Base in Tampa, or foretold the months of ailments her family faced.

Norquist, her Army husband and their four children moved into their Florida home in July, she told The Post. Shortly thereafter, their health problems mushroomed. One child went to the emergency room with breathing problems. Another developed pneumonia, she said.

Spores ringed an air duct, photos provided to The Post show. Instead of replacing sub-flooring, a contractor referred by the property manager, Harbor Bay, sanded through the mold but didn’t cover the family’s clothes, furniture and carpets, she said, bombarding their home with toxic spores as they huddled in a hotel room for nearly two months.

Michael’s Military Housing, the parent company of Harbor Bay, did not respond to a request for comment.

Once the family came back in October, the real health problems began. Her husband needed an inhaler despite having no history of asthma, and their daughter Elise’s respiratory problems were linked to mold. The family was forced to move off-base.

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See *Lawmakers blast companies* on page 7

Lawmakers Blast Companies Overseeing Military Homes Racked by Toxic Dangers (cont'd)

Continued from page 6...

In a statement, the Pentagon said tenants can resolve issues by withholding rent payments and contacting the management companies or their base's housing office. They can also escalate their cases to installation commanders or an inspector general, said Heather Babb, a Pentagon spokeswoman.

Respondents to the survey said that it was not that easy and that they found it difficult, or impossible, to withhold rent or to pressure commanders and companies to intervene in emergencies.

Several families interviewed “were unwilling to come forward publicly because they were afraid of retaliation or negative impact on their service member’s career,” the survey said.

Each of executives at Wednesday’s hearing agreed one chief problem was a failure of communication on their part between tenants and service representatives.

At Fort Bragg in North Carolina, Heather Beckstrom believes her daughter’s epilepsy, her son’s cancer diagnosis and her other son’s cleft palate are linked to the untreated sewer water from a chronically overflowing toilet that sent several inches of water gushing onto the floor. It occurred so frequently and forcefully, she said, that a water line was visible on the stucco from the outside.

Her request to move houses was denied in October 2012 by Corvias, the property manager, but was quickly reversed and granted on grounds of home safety concerns rather than health concerns, she said.

In a statement, Corvias acknowledged failures and said it instituted measures to improve service quality, measures such as fast response repair times and a bigger residential support staff for the 27,000 military homes in its portfolio.

Several families interviewed “were unwilling to come forward publicly because they were afraid of retaliation or negative impact on their service member’s career.”

Lawmakers Blast Companies Overseeing Military Homes Racked by Toxic Dangers (cont'd)

The privatization effort at first prompted cost-cutting, Douglas said, triggered “lower-touch service,” fewer staff members and less communication with residents.

“For that we are sorry, but we are committed to making whatever changes are necessary to balance economics with great resident service,” she said.

Beckstrom was unmoved by Corvias’s statement.

“I question their sincerity because of the timing,” she said, citing the Senate hearing and investigations of the company by Reuters. “The damage has been done long-term.”

At the time Beckstrom lived on base, Fort Bragg was experiencing an epidemic of infant deaths. In one home alone, three infants from three families died, igniting concern that there were common environmental hazards.

Norquist thinks the fight has been so pronounced that it has affected the military’s effort abroad. Her husband’s deployment was postponed after the house and medical problems arose. Now his asthma has held him back indefinitely.

“This has been detrimental to force readiness for him,” she said. “How can he deploy and defend the country when he’s worried about his family surviving?”

To read this article, click [here](#). Environmental problems in military housing have been occurring for decades. To read additional articles, go to pages 8-9.

See *Mold in military housing* on page 8

Additional Articles about Mold and Other Environmental Problems in Military Housing

Additional articles about mold and other environmental problems in military housing:

Fort Bragg (North Carolina) Infant Death Toll May Climb to Twelve. March 8, 2011. Click [here](#).

- *A 12th infant has died of undetermined causes in military housing at Fort Bragg, N.C.*
- *The first unexplained infant death at Fort Bragg occurred in **February 2007**. Three children from three different families died in a single home.*

Fort Bragg (North Carolinas) Families Vent About Mold, Housing Concerns at Town Hall. **February 20, 2019 (12 years later, the problems continue)**. Click [here](#).

Military Families Battle Mice, Mold and Mushrooms at the Mercy of Private Landlords. November 4, 2018. Click [here](#).

- *One example of more than 100 families across **Navy, Army, Marine Corps and Air Force bases** that detailed to Reuters their hardships in dealing with private companies and landlords controlling the military base housing industry.*

Military Families Sue Over Black Mold in Their Homes (at **Keesler Air Force Base, Mississippi**). July 18, 2018. Click [here](#).

- *Mold started in 2015 and environmental testing of the homes led to the discovery of high levels of aspergillus and stachybotrys.*

State Wants Army to do More Near **Fort Gillen (Georgia)**. January 5, 2015. Click [here](#).

- *Houses tested positive for elevated levels of chemicals like trimethylbenzene and trichloroethylene.*

Laughlin Air Force Base (Texas) Resident Brings Dangerous Housing Concerns to Capitol Hill. February 21, 2019. Click [here](#).

Mold and other environmental problems in military housing have been occurring for decades. A new bill was introduced by senators on March 7. Will it move forward?

What about mold in non-military housing, schools and workplaces? Will they ever admit or address the full scope of the problem?

Additional Articles about Mold and Other Environmental Problems in Military Housing (cont'd)

Service Members Say Mold is a Problem on **Parris Island (South Carolina)**. November 20, 2015. Click [here](#).

- *Imagine living in a building where mold grows on everything, and there was nothing you can do about it. According to some Parris Island Marines and sailors, that's how they have to live.*

Fort Gordon (Georgia) Leaders Researching Facebook Post Claiming Mold in Barracks. January 7, 2016. Click [here](#).

- *The room was covered in mold every three to four days. Once bleached, the mold returns.*

Fort Campbell (Kentucky) Housing Has Heavy Mold, Spiders and Roaches, Say Soldiers and Their Families. February 27, 2019. Click [here](#).

- *Residents of Fort Campbell on-post housing tell of heavy mold problems in their living spaces that keep them and their children chronically ill.*

Camp Pendleton (California) fecal matter and chemicals in drinking water. June 1, 2018. Click [here](#).

- *The Pentagon has reported that **hundreds of water sources on its active and closed bases** have tested for higher than recommended levels of PFOS and PFOA chemical compounds that have been tied to cancers and developmental issues.*

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See *Mold in military housing* on page 9

Additional Articles about Mold and Other Environmental Problems in Military Housing (cont'd)

Continued from page 8...

Former CIA Agent Claims the Military Poisoned His Family at **Camp Stanley (Virginia)**. October 11, 2011. Click [here](#).

- Between the **summers of 1999 and 2001**, the government housed them in an Army-owned home infested with a variety of bacteria and mold.
- His wife suffered migraines, confusion and short-term memory loss.
- His children suffered nosebleeds, rashes, bleeding gums, breathing problems and frequent vomiting.

Lawmakers Press Military Housing Company on Mold. **Hampton Roads naval military bases (Virginia)**.

December 12, 2011. Click [here](#). To view two special news videos from April 16, 2012, on the problems at Hampton Roads, click [here](#) and [here](#).

- *Hampton Roads is the East Coast epicenter of military activity. It includes Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps and Coast Guard facilities.*

Navy's Liability at issue in Court Cases for Moldy Military Housing (at **Norfolk Naval Station, Virginia**). September 13, 2012. Click [here](#).

- *More than 200 families came forward to share their stories of mold and water damage in Lincoln Military Housing.*

At U.S. Marine Base, Families Plead for Housing Help After Florence at **Camp Lejeune (North Carolina)**. September 29, 2018. Click [here](#).

- Two weeks after Hurricane Florence devastated parts of the U.S. Southeast, military families say they are still residing in unlivable conditions and awaiting help from the base's private housing manager.

In 2005, the Army released an environmental study that said 75 percent of its 90,000 homes nationwide didn't meet its own standards of quality or safety.

Additional Articles about Mold and Other Environmental Problems in Military Housing (cont'd)

Black Mold Found in **Fort Polk Barracks (Louisiana)**. April 30, 2007. Click [here](#).

- *Mold has been an **enemy inside the walls of Fort Polk for years.***
- *To really wipe away the mold problem all of the ventilation systems on base must be replaced, a 27-million-dollar project.*
- *Several buildings still have asbestos in the walls with removal costs at half a million dollars per barracks.*

Children Poisoned by Lead on U.S. Army Bases as Hazards Go Ignored (**Fort Benning, Georgia**). August 16, 2018). Click [here](#).

- *A Reuters investigation unearths dangers in base homes, lapses in military oversight, and a code of silence keeping families at risk.*
- *Army Colonel moves his family into Fort Benning **base housing in 2011.** His infant son became very ill due to lead poisoning. He has spent many years telling the Army about lead in base housing.*
- **The military knew hazards lurked in its housing. In 2005, the Army released an environmental study that said 75 percent of its 90,000 homes nationwide didn't meet its own standards of quality or safety.**

In 2016, twenty years after privatization began, a DOD Inspector General report found that poor maintenance and oversight left service families vulnerable to "pervasive" health and safety hazards.

Now, here we are in March 2019. We are still "talking about these problems." A [bill](#) was introduced by senators on March 7. Will it move forward?

New Report: Healthy Buildings, Healthier People

The Health and Environment Alliance (HEAL) in Brussels, Belgium, issued a [new report](#) titled “Healthy Buildings, Healthier People.”

What this briefing aims to highlight is that there is a cost to society from the health outcomes attributable to unhealthy buildings, particularly to the health sector.

In addition to those direct health consequences, there is also an environmental perspective. Buildings are an important sector to tackle if we are to protect health from the impacts of climate change since they are responsible for a third of the EU’s greenhouse gas emissions and consume 40% of total energy in the EU.

The buildings sector has been rightly identified as one of the key sectors in need of transformation to achieve the 2020 climate targets of the European Union as well as the Paris Climate Agreement to limit global warming well below two degrees.

According to a 2016 report looking at the cost of addressing the shortcomings of the EU housing stock alone, €295 billion EUR (2011 prices) would be required, but would be recouped within 18 months by projected savings such as lower healthcare costs and better social outcomes. In other words, for every €3 invested, €2 would pay back in one year.

Thus, renovating existing buildings and making sure new buildings are constructed in a climate-friendly and health-promoting way could not only decrease energy bills and consequently energy poverty and reduce CO2 emissions, but also holds the potential to improve people’s physical and mental health through healthier indoor conditions.

This would also be reflected in national health care costs: the total cost to the British National Health Service attributable to the health outcomes from unhealthy housing alone (residential buildings) to be approximately 717 million EUR per year. The French Agency for Food, Environmental and Occupational Health & Safety conducted a scoping study of the socio-economic cost of indoor air pollution and estimates the cost to be 19 billion EUR per year from premature deaths, healthcare costs and production losses.

Renovating existing buildings and making sure new buildings are constructed in a climate-friendly and health-promoting way could not only decrease energy bills and consequently energy poverty and reduce CO2 emissions but also holds the potential to improve people’s physical and mental health through healthier indoor conditions.

UCLA Toolkit to Support Fragrance-Free Environments

The UCLA Center for the Study of Women has introduced a Fragrance-Free Toolkit to help businesses move to healthier indoor air environments. The toolkit includes sample signs and information on:

- The basics about being fragrance-free, why it matters, and what chemical sensitivities are
- Tips on making your home, office, event, or any space at UCLA fragrance-free and accessible
- Information on research around fragrances and chemical sensitivities

They point out that:

Exposure to scented products can impact the health of all individuals, not just those with asthma, allergies, migraines, or chemical sensitivities.

Individuals can experience sinus congestion, sore throat, wheezing, coughing, runny nose, shortness of breath, headache, dizziness, anxiety, anger, nausea, fatigue, mental confusion, and an inability to concentrate.

Scented products include many toxicants classified as volatile organic chemicals (VOCs), which are derived from petroleum. Since VOCs vaporize at room temperature, they can be readily inhaled, entering the respiratory track and passing the blood-brain barrier.

Beware of products that list “fragrance/parfum” as an ingredient. In the U.S., companies are not required to provide details about those fragrances (chemicals).

To learn more, click [here](#).

See *Mold legislation* on page 11

South Carolina Lawmakers Pushing for Mold Reforms in Public Buildings and Schools

State lawmakers are trying to prevent how much mold is in public buildings and schools, in the wake of air quality complaints at several schools across the state, including one in Horry County.

A bill in the state Senate aims to create a mold abatement and remediation committee. The committee's goal would be to study the impact of mold in public areas. The bill is sponsored by several lawmakers across the state, a majority of which are from the Upstate, where there are complaints of mold in several buildings, including a school.

The committee would also work to make public buildings more resilient to flood damage and mold growth.

"We want proper mold remediation guidelines to be prepared and presented by a certified industrial hygienist," said Meredith Smith.

St. James Elementary parents, who are worried mold in the building is giving children chronic sicknesses, also want reforms. They spoke to the Horry County Schools board Monday about changes they want the district to make. They gave the HCS board a petition with about 1,250 signatures and a list of actions they want the district to take about the mold issues.

The parents are also pushing for the mold committee bill.

"This bill was set forth to study the impact of mold and remediation in public buildings, including the schools in South Carolina," said Ann Steinmuller, a retired teacher in the HCS system.

The committee would also study mold's impact on public health. The bill places a special emphasis on how mold affects schoolchildren.

The bill passed in the state House of Representatives on February 12 and is now in the Senate's medical affairs committee. To read the article, click [here](#).

South Carolina: A bill in the state Senate aims to create a mold abatement and remediation committee. The bill is sponsored by several lawmakers across the state. It passed in the House on February 12.

North Carolina: A North Carolina state lawmaker is looking to address mold problems in housing with new legislation. Our hope is that we can modernize our state housing standards, so that they're reflective of the realities that we're facing.

North Carolina Lawmaker Looks to Address Mold Problems in Housing with New Legislation

A North Carolina state lawmaker is looking to address mold problems in housing with new legislation.

"Our hope is that we can modernize our standards, our state housing standards, so that they're reflective of the realities that we're facing," NC State House of Representative (D) Chaz Beasley told FOX 46 Charlotte.

FOX 46 has reported, at length, about mold issues at rental housing complexes across the region, and they found that City of Charlotte Code Enforcement does not issue violations for mold.

FOX 46's stories, highlighting complaints from tenants, led to code enforcement inspecting every apartment at the Lake Arbor Apartments (nearly 300 units) and violations were found in every unit.

On top of west Charlotte's Lake Arbor, FOX 46 has reported about mold issues at North Cross Townhomes in north Charlotte and Heritage Park Apartments in east Charlotte.

"We've already sent language over to our bill drafting division," Rep. Beasley said. "We're going to take that to our stakeholders, get buy-in, make sure that we have a solution that works in practical-real life...but also get solutions going forward to prevent these types of problems from arising in the future." To read the article, click [here](#).

New Law Will Give Tenants the Power to Sue Landlords Over Mouldy Homes (United Kingdom)

Tenants are set to be given new rights to challenge landlords if their rented homes are not up to standard.

Which will be welcoming news to anyone who has or currently lives in shoddy accommodation and have been at the mercy of the landlord's schedule when looking to get repairs done.

A new law will come into effect next month which will allow tenants to sue landlords to force them to bring rented homes up to scratch.

According to SurreyLive, The Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Act comes into effect on March 20 and allows disgruntled tenants to go to the courts if their accommodation is not maintained well enough.

An update of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985, the new law will apply to tenancies of less than seven years in England and Wales.

Renters can go to the courts if the property is deemed unfit for living.

One of the interesting things about the new act is what qualifies as 'unfit for living'.

It will include properties that are too cold or too hot, those that have damp or asbestos and those with noise or lighting issues, alongside a host of other problems which would seem common to renters who have suffered in the past from poorly-maintained properties.

Housing organisation Shelter say they welcome the legislation and said that the Bill covers the "glaring omissions" of previous legislation to include damp and mould.

"The Bill could help to prevent another tragedy like the Grenfell tower fire. This was the starkest reminder of the dangers of unsafe accommodation.

To read the article, click [here](#).



3,000 Army Families Win Compensation Due to Poor Housing Conditions (United Kingdom)

Three thousand armed forces families have won compensation after being forced to live in squalid Army housing, it was revealed.

Servicemen and women have taken action after being made to wait weeks for repairs to heating systems, damp, mould or even rat infestation.

About 1,000 complaints a month have been made about shoddy conditions endured in military homes, official documents show. Some claim conditions were so bad they have made their children ill.

Last night, a former Army chief called for more cash to be spent on housing for service families.

Contractors responsible for the upkeep of Army homes have received 3,586 claims for compensation from fed up occupants between August 2015 and January 2018 and paid out for 2,953 cases.

Former Army boss Lord Dannatt said housing conditions were so bad they were having a negative impact on troops and their families.

He added: "I am not convinced enough is being spent on personnel matters such as good housing, barrack maintenance and allowances to mitigate some of the difficult circumstances of service life and general welfare."

To read the article, click [here](#).

Report Confirms Toxic Mold at Flagler Ops Center (Florida)

A long-awaited report released Thursday appears to uphold preliminary assessments from experts who conducted invasive tests inside the Flagler County Sheriff's Office Operations Center in January.

Flagler County officials paid Terracon, a Kansas-based engineering consultant, \$9,100 to cut 36 holes into walls throughout the Sheriff's Office headquarters as part of "invasive testing" January 3 and 4. The team of inspectors from Terracon's Winter Park office discovered what they believed was the presence of mold, water intrusion, old wood under new construction and bat droppings during the two-day evaluation.

Lab analyses confirmed those preliminary findings, according to the 50-page report from Terracon. An indoor air quality study also showed high levels of so-called black mold near an evidence freezer, as well as the presence of a pathogen in the walls known to cause lung infections in people.

The operations center building has been tainted with sick building suspicions for nearly a year now. At least 37 Sheriff's Office employees once assigned to work inside the agency headquarters have filed workers' compensation complaints, claiming contaminants in the building caused them to become sick.

Sheriff Rick Staly ordered an emergency evacuation of the building last June and attorneys representing the employees in the workers' compensation cases have put both the Sheriff's Office and Flagler County government on notice that they plan to file dozens of civil lawsuits.

Terracon architect James E Saizan, mold assessor John O'Reilly and project engineer Brian DuChene collaborated on the report, which was sent to Interim County Administrator Jerry Cameron on Thursday morning. Their analysis reveals that an accumulation of moisture from pipe condensation was causing mold to grow in the walls behind an evidence locker. There was also water intrusion noted in the wall cavities of the building's main evidence room and behind the wall bases of a main office for detectives.

Staly has publicly stated he doesn't think he'll ever feel comfortable moving his agency back into the operations center. He maintained that skepticism Thursday, saying he doesn't believe the building can be remediated enough to convince his agency it's safe for re-occupancy.

Report Confirms Toxic Mold at Flagler Ops Center (Florida)—cont'd

Bat droppings also were found in a wall cavity near the roof of a training room on the southeast wing of the building. Terracon tested those droppings and noted the presence of *histoplasma capsulatum*, a toxin associated with bat roosting. Exposure to the fungus can cause rashes and severe infections, particularly among people with compromised immune systems.

Lab results also showed levels of *stachybotrys cladosporium*, commonly known as black mold, behind drywall in a cold storage evidence freezer.

But it was the "moisture, musty odors and visible mold growth" beneath carpet tile flooring in 11 areas, including various offices and hallways, that Sheriff's Office officials honed in on. The report also indicates there were elevated levels of surface mold counts below the floor finishes.

"It is Terracon's opinion that the primary source of odors and resulting employee complaints of skin rashes and upper respiratory issues is related to the stagnant moisture and mold growth on the back side of floor finishes," the report states.

Staly has publicly stated he doesn't think he'll ever feel comfortable moving his agency back into the operations center. He maintained that skepticism Thursday, saying he doesn't believe the building can be remediated enough to convince his agency it's safe for re-occupancy.

To read the article, click [here](#).

American Lung Association Report on the “State of Tobacco Control”

The full title of the report is:

"State of Tobacco Control" 2019: The Failure by Government Officials to Act Jeopardizes Lives and Lung Health

The 17th annual American Lung Association "State of Tobacco Control" report evaluates states and the federal government on actions taken to halt the nation's leading cause of preventable death—tobacco-caused disease—and save lives with proven-effective and urgently needed tobacco control laws and policies.

As a result of implementing the policies called for in "State of Tobacco Control," adult and youth cigarette smoking rates are at an all-time low, with 7.6 percent of high school students¹ and 14.0 percent of adults smoking cigarettes.² In particularly positive news, there was a significant drop in adult smoking rates from 15.5 percent in 2016 to 14.0 percent in 2017.³ However, this positive news was tempered by a dramatic and extremely troubling 78 percent rise in youth e-cigarette use from 2017 to 2018.⁴

Continued progress on reducing both cigarette smoking, and other tobacco product use requires more aggressive action on the part of our federal, state and local governments. On that front, the American Lung Association's 2019 "State of Tobacco Control" report showed a disturbing failure of our policymakers to put in place meaningful policies to prevent and reduce tobacco use in 2018 at both the state and federal level. This failure places the lung health and lives of Americans at risk.

The failure to act to apply proven-effective policies to other tobacco products including cigars and e-cigarettes is directly responsible for the dramatic rise in youth e-cigarette use, and 27 percent of youth now use at least one tobacco product.⁶ This could set the stage for not only another generation of Americans addicted to tobacco products but ultimately more tobacco-caused death and disease. Nicotine is not only addictive but also harms adolescent brain development and places youth at risk for a host of other lung diseases related to this relatively new tobacco product.

November 23, 2018, marked the 20th anniversary of the 1998 tobacco Master Settlement Agreement (MSA), where 46 states, 1, the District of Columbia and several U.S. territories reached a legal settlement with the tobacco industry requiring the industry to make annual payments to the states in perpetuity to reimburse states for tobacco-caused healthcare costs.

Overall, states are spending only three cents of every dollar from tobacco settlement payments and tobacco taxes on tobacco control programs in fiscal year 2019.

American Lung Association Report on the “State of Tobacco Control” (continued)

The Failure to Act Emboldens the Tobacco Industry

For decades, the tobacco industry has urged federal, state and local officials to delay meaningful action or not take any action at all to prevent and reduce tobacco use, especially among youth. This has resulted in a vicious circle, with tobacco companies becoming even more emboldened to devise new and egregious ways to addict youth and sustain addiction among current users. This delay, allows tobacco companies to resist meaningful action to protect public health as it would potentially cut into company profits.

This has been especially true of the policies called for in "State of Tobacco Control" 2019. The tobacco industry and its allies routinely oppose efforts at the state level to increase tobacco taxes, pass comprehensive smoke-free laws, and in recent years, oppose efforts to increase the tobacco sales age to 21 and restrict access to flavored tobacco products to protect youth.

FDA has full authority over the manufacture, marketing and sale of tobacco products in the U.S. under a law passed by Congress in 2009 and through the 2016 "deeming" rule. However, in many cases, the agency has failed to implement the law and use this comprehensive authority to put meaningful restrictions on tobacco products in place.

To read the full report, click [here](#).

Fracking Can't Be Done Without Threatening Public Health

Fracking for oil and gas poses an impending health crisis in the U.S., two leading groups of health professionals warn in a new report. **Not only do existing fracking regulations fail to protect Americans from increased risk of cancer, asthma and birth defects, but there is no evidence fracking can ever be done without threatening public health, according to the authors.**

The report, by Concerned Health Professionals of New York and Physicians for Social Responsibility, pulls together studies, data and news reports on the health and environmental impacts of hydraulic fracturing of natural gas and oil wells. In fracking, a slurry of water, chemicals and sand is injected deep underground at drilling sites. The chemicals and chemical-laced wastewater can contaminate drinking water and send hazardous emissions into the air, endangering people who live nearby, as well as workers at drilling sites.

One of the report's authors, Dr. Sandra Steingraber, told Rolling Stone that in her long career as a biologist, environmental writer and advocate, "Fracking is the worst thing I've ever seen." She continued:

Those of us in the public health sector started to realize years ago that there were potential risks, then the industry rolled out faster than we could do our science. Now we see those risks have turned into human harms and people are getting sick. And we in this field have a moral imperative to raise the alarm.

The report is the fifth edition of a yearly compendium that details extensive studies on increased risks of cancer, asthma and birth defects for people who live near fracking sites. For example:

- In 2017, researchers from Princeton University, the University of Chicago and the University of California, Los Angeles found that children born within half a mile of fracked wells have a one-in-four probability of low birth weight and significant declines in average birth weight.
- In 2014, a study by researchers from the Colorado School of Public Health examined data on more than 100,000 births in rural Colorado between 1996 and 2009. They found an association between the proximity of the mother's residence to natural gas production sites and an elevated risk of birth defects, such as heart and neural tube defects.



Fracking Can't Be Done Without Threatening Public Health (cont'd)

In all, the new report surveyed 1,300 peer-reviewed studies from 2012 through 2017, and found:

- 69 percent of the water quality studies found potential for or actual water contamination
- 87 percent of air quality studies found significant air pollutant emissions
- 84 percent of human health studies found signs of harm or indication of potential harm

FracTracker, a nonprofit that studies and maps fracking nationwide, estimates that there are 1.3 million facilities tied to the fracking industry, including wells, compressor stations and processing plants in the U.S. A peer-reviewed 2017 study by researchers from the nonprofit PSE Healthy Energy, Harvey Mudd College and the University of California, Berkeley estimated that 17.6 million people live within one mile of at least one active oil or gas well, including 1.4 million young children.

The new report says fracking poses significant threats not just to air, water and people's health, but also to "public safety, climate stability, seismic stability, community cohesion, and long-term economic vitality."

The report's most disturbing finding is that no amount of regulation can prevent air and water pollution, or the subsequent health impacts, from fracking and other oil and gas infrastructure.

To read the article, click [here](#).

Mouldy Homes, Workplaces Making Residents Sick (Jamaica)

Many Jamaicans are placing their lives at risk by living and working in mould-infested homes and commercial buildings for prolonged periods, a local researcher has found.

According to Northern Caribbean University (NCU) lecturer, Dian Camoy Griffiths, a study she conducted in 2015 has confirmed that several residents living in Manchester had got ill because they were either living or working in sick buildings.

Griffiths is a graduate student from the College of Natural and Applied Sciences, Allied Health and Nursing.

“Persons were complaining of itching of the eyes, some persons had rash, some persons congestion, headache, these were some of the symptoms that came out of the investigation,” said Griffiths, whose study is titled ‘Environmental Investigation of Sick Buildings, Remedial Action and Health Impacts on Residents in Manchester, Jamaica’, she told editors and reporters last Thursday during a Gleaner Editors’ Forum.

“For those in the workplace, they complain that whenever it is that they go inside the building, that’s when the condition would generally occur, so they would start feeling stuffy. Some persons started sneezing, some persons started wheezing, but by the time they reach home in the evening, these symptoms or majority would be less.”

From her study, the 35-year-old researcher concluded that the sick-building syndrome, which many attributed to doctors and patients becoming ill at the Cornwall Regional Hospital in 2018, is real. The hospital has been hit by wide-scale respiratory illness linked to mould infestation.

The Sir Alister McIntyre Building at The University of the West Indies, Mona campus, was also dubbed a sick building in 2015 after mould infestation became an occupational hazard for students and staff.

The air-quality issues at Cornwall Regional Hospital resulted in officials relocating several of its services and resulted in a partial shutdown of the facility for rehabilitation. An independent oversight committee has put the repair bill at \$3.5 billion.

Mouldy Homes, Workplaces Making Residents Sick (Jamaica)—cont’d

Griffiths said she decided to focus her study on Mandeville because of the Manchester capital’s humidity. At least 70 homes and business places were investigated over six months. The air quality at each building was analysed.

During the course of the study, the researcher found that many of those she interacted with were desperate for the mould situation to be addressed so that they could enjoy their homes.

“This particular parent, she had a child that was now developing bronchitis,” Griffiths told the forum. “She said that the doctor was proposing that what is actually happening to the child may be because of where she is living and the mould infestation that is taking place.”

The air-quality issues at Cornwall Regional Hospital resulted in officials relocating several of its services and resulted in a partial shutdown of the facility for rehabilitation. An independent oversight committee has put the repair bill at \$3.5 billion.

To read the article, click [here](#).

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